



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

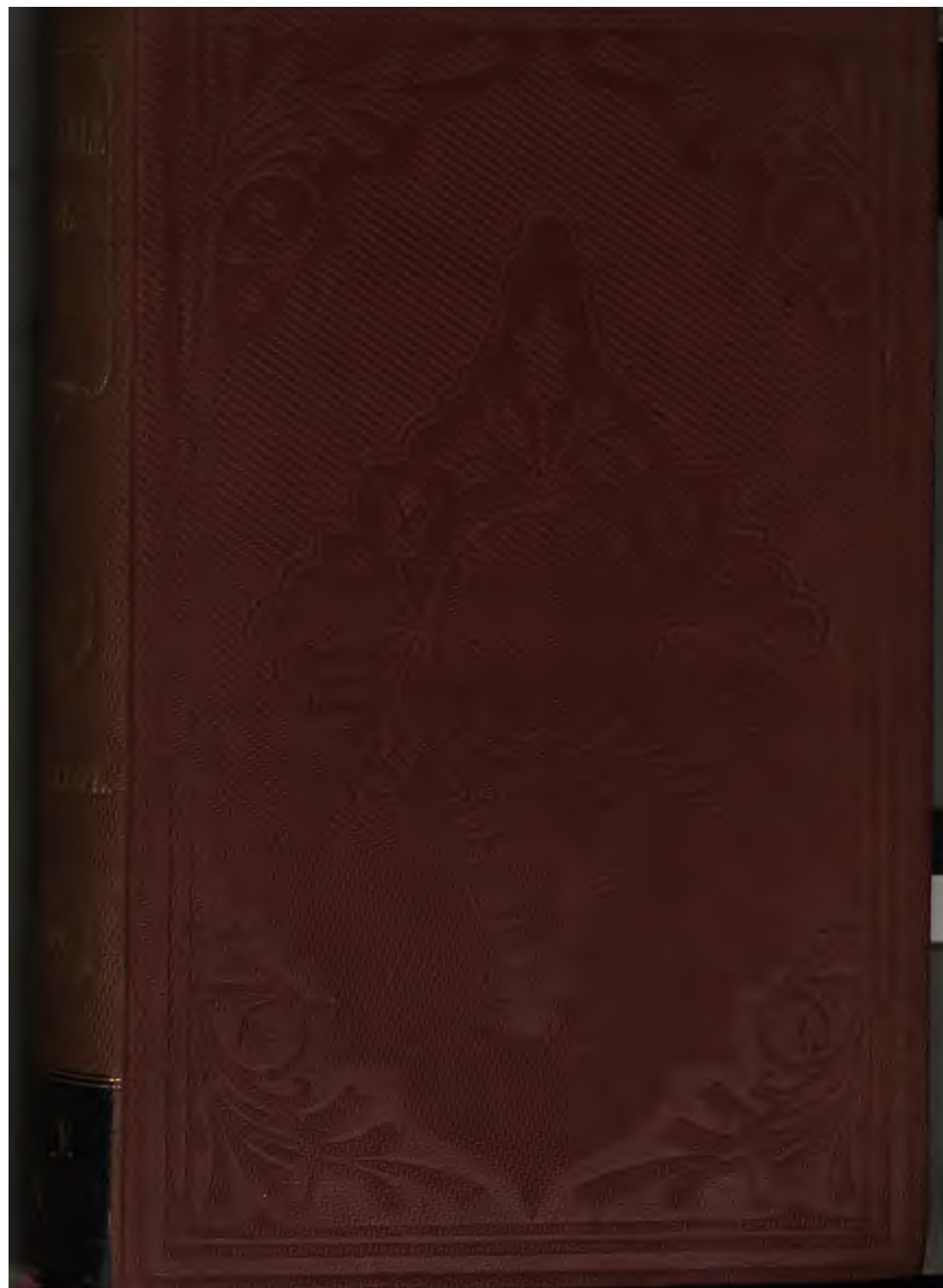
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

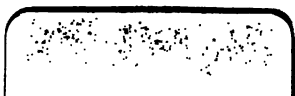
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600056026P



FASHIONABLE LIFE;

OR,

PARIS AND LONDON.

BY

MRS. TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF A CLEVER WOMAN,"

"THE BARNABYS," &c.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1856.

249. 14. 53.

PARIS AND LONDON.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN an English merchant dies at an advanced age, whose commercial career has been uniformly fortunate, and who has never been tempted to squander either in riotous or in splendid living the wealth which he has accumulated, it would be, generally speaking, much better for him to leave several children to inherit his wealth, than one.

The transition from living in a quiet house in a northern square, to occupying a splendid mansion in a western one, is very great ; and if this sudden change betides a young girl

whose ignorance of everything beyond her school-room is as great as a young girl's reading and experience is likely to leave it, she has certainly a very perilous future before her.

Clara Holmwood, the heroine of the following narrative, was left very nearly in this predicament. At the age of nineteen she was given to understand that she was in possession of a fortune considerably above a hundred thousand pounds, and that her only guardian was the celebrated Dr. Brixbourg, who had attended her father in his last illness.

Dr. Brixbourg would never have been the celebrated Dr. Brixbourg, if he had not been a very clever man, for he began life humbly enough. But he really was a very clever man, and often shewed as much, or even more talent in his manner of treating the minds of his patients, than in the skill with which he administered relief to their bodies.

The malady of which Mr. Holmwood died was one which produced great suffering, though it did not at its commencement immediately threaten life. It began by a sort of rheumatic affection of the limbs, which caused

him more annoyance, perhaps, from impeding him in his usual active habits, than by the positive pain it occasioned.

For the first month or two after the malady attacked Mr. Holmwood, his medical adviser was an old gentleman, who had attended him and his family from the time of his marriage; but having happened to hear the name of Dr. Brixbourg mentioned, in conjunction with that of some eminent individual who had been suffering from a malady similar to his own, and who had greatly benefitted by his prescriptions; Mr. Holmwood immediately sent for him, and dismissing his former attendant with a magnificently handsome fee, put himself wholly under the care of the "west end" practitioner.

Our sick corn merchant had heard no more than the truth when told that the fashionable physician, Dr. Brixbourg, was a very clever person; he was in truth a learned and experienced physician, and moreover he was an exceedingly quick-witted and acute man.

It took him but a short time to ascertain that Mr. Holmwood, at the age of sixty-nine,

was not very likely to lose his chronic rheumatism, let his physician do all that nature could suggest or art dictate ; nor did it take him very much longer to feel pretty nearly as certain that a vast deal might be easily done with him in the way of moral influence.

His first prescription was both arbitrary and important, for it dictated the immediate secession from all active business.

"I should hope, sir," said the intelligent physician, "that it could no longer be absolutely necessary for you to harass your mind by personal attention to commercial affairs. Depend upon it, Mr. Holmwood, the mind is the most important part of that wonderful machine called man ; and if this portion of it be worked too much, or too long, our general well-being must suffer for it. I cannot but hope, from the general appearance of everything about you, that your worldly circumstances must be such as may fairly entitle you to the enjoyment of repose."

Dr. Brixbourg did not say this without having been informed upon good authority, that his new patient was accounted one

of the most wealthy men in the city of London.

Mr. Holmwood quietly smiled as he listened to these words ; and he replied :

“ Your opinion of my worldly situation, doctor, does me honour ; and I will not pretend to say that you are far wrong. If I were to wind up my commercial affairs to-morrow, sir, I flatter myself that I might find more than *one plum* to reward me for my industry and perseverance.”

The physician understood him perfectly, and in return for the smile with which this boast was uttered, permitted a merry twinkle to escape from his own bright black eyes.

“ Well then, Mr. Holmwood,” said he, “ we could not understand one another better if we discussed the subject for a twelvemonth. I tell *you*, that unless you are a necessitous, poor man, you ought, for your health’s sake, to settle your affairs, and give up at once, and for ever, all attention to business, save and except what is inseparable from the calamity of possessing a large fortune ; and you tell *me* in reply, that you are not a neces-

situous, poor man, but that you are in possession of a large fortune. And my rejoinder to this is the consolatory remark, that the sort of occupation produced by this possession of a large fortune is not at all likely to disagree with you. And now, my good sir, it only remains with you, to decide whether or not you will make up your accounts, and leave business at once, and for ever."

"Well, doctor, you put the case plain enough, certainly; and as I have sent to you that I might profit by your judgment, I should make but a bad bargain if I did not listen to you."

"Yes, sir. You would be giving me my fee for nothing," said the doctor, demurely.

"Quite true, perfectly true," returned the patient. "But before I decide upon taking so strong a measure," added Mr. Holmwood thoughtfully, "I wish you would give me a hint as to how you think I shall be able to employ my time. I have passed six or seven hours every morning of my life, for the last fifty years, and more, in my office, or in the office of my father before me, in Mark Lane,

and I can't for the life of me, think how I am to get through that time."

"Have you any family, sir?" inquired the doctor.

"I have only one daughter, Dr. Brix-bourg, and a maiden sister of my own, who has lived with me ever since my father died."

"A lady also of large fortune, I presume," said the doctor, with a sort of complimentary bow.

"No, indeed, she is not," was the reply; "and I don't think we should have lived so long together if she had been; for she is not at all the sort of elegant, accomplished lady, that my daughter has a right to expect as a companion, for I have had *her* taught just everything. But the fact is, I could not well help it, doctor, for my father had got a notion into his head, when he made his will, that his business wanted every sixpence of the capital he had got, in order to carry it on with advantage, and therefore, instead of leaving any money to poor sister Sarah, he left poor sister Sarah to me. So, of course, I could not do less than maintain her. But in the way of

learning, she positively knows nothing; and though I don't believe she is out and out a fool, she has got very little in her, for she is as simple-minded as a child. That is all the family I have got, doctor, so I certainly cannot complain much of being overpowered by domestic anxieties."

"And what age is your daughter, Mr. Holmwood?" inquired the physician.

"She was seventeen her last birthday," replied the father, with a sudden look of animation; "and I must say, that I should like you to see her, one of these days. Sarah says that she is no beauty, and so, I suppose, my thinking her rather well-looking, is just a proof of fatherly partiality and blindness."

"I assure you, sir, I shall have great pleasure in making the young lady's acquaintance," replied Dr. Brixbourg, very cordially.

"Well, then, come along with me at once, doctor," returned the venerable patient, rising from his arm-chair with as much alacrity as his malady would permit. "I never stand upon any ceremony with Miss Clara; but I come and go into her school-room, as Sarah

calls it, at all times and seasons, whenever the whim takes me."

"I presume that the young lady has a governess with her, still?"

"A governess, indeed! Why, she never *had* any governess but her aunt Sarah; for she told me fairly, when I proposed it, that she would run away the very first hour that I let a governess come near her."

"Really!" ejaculated Dr. Brixbourg, pausing, as they approached the door. "Don't you think Mr. Holmwood," he added, "that it would be as well to announce to the young lady that you are going to bring a stranger to visit her? When young ladies are permitted to be their own mistresses, they like to be treated with a little ceremony."

"No, doctor! Clara has nothing of that sort about her. I believe she thinks herself quite a child still, though she was not only seventeen two months ago, but is a tall girl for her age; but sister Sarah tells me, that though she has learnt so much, she is still very childish; but the schoolmaster says, that

it does not signify, and that perhaps she will be all the better for it."

"The schoolmaster!" repeated Dr. Brixbourg, looking exceedingly puzzled.

Mr. Holmwood laughed heartily, and sat down again, apparently much amused.

"I am very glad I happened to mention him," said he; "for I am got so used to it myself now, that I am apt to forget how very odd it must appear to other people. And yet, I think, the scheme has answered too, because Sarah says she certainly does know more things than any other girl she ever heard of."

"And she has had a schoolmaster to teach her, has she?" said Dr. Brixbourg, rubbing his chin, and looking meditative. "Does the gentleman live in the house?"

"Why, no; I can't call it living in the house, because he does not sleep here," replied Mr. Holmwood; "but Clara has wanted so much of his time lately, on account of her growing older, and wishing to learn more, that he is here almost all day long; so much so, indeed, that he has given up his school,

and I pay him just as I should pay a tutor, you know, if Clara were a boy."

"And may I ask what the young lady's studies are?" said the curious doctor.

"God bless your soul! my dear sir, I have no more notion than the man in the moon! And there can't be any necessity, you see, for me to trouble myself about the matter; because I am quite sure he can't be teaching her any mischief; for he is a clergyman, and has been the curate of our parish for years," replied the invalid.

"Well, then, if you think we sha'n't disturb your daughter, I shall be happy to pay my compliments to her," returned the physician; and the two gentlemen then proceeded together to an apartment over the drawing-room, which was still distinguished by the appellation of "Miss Clara's school-room."

CHAPTER II.

THE climbing up so many stairs was not accomplished without some difficulty by the rheumatic patient; but having reached the door at the top, he threw it open, and said, "Clara! here is my good friend, Dr. Brixbourg; my new doctor, you know. He wants to make acquaintance with you, my dear, and I have brought him to pay you a visit."

The doctor entered, and made a sort of general bow to the three persons he found there.

The first of these which his eye rested upon was an old grey-headed man, whose dress, though somewhat rusty, clearly proclaimed him to be a clergyman. Close beside him (both apparently reading from the same vo-

lume) sat a young girl, whose almost raven hair contrasted strongly with the silver locks of her companion.

The third figure was that of a middle-aged lady, who was so earnestly occupied by some needle-work, that she did not raise her eyes as the door opened.

Clara, on seeing the strange gentleman enter, immediately rose, for her reverend tutor had not taught her to understand the various laws of various receptions; and when *she* rose, the grey-headed clergyman rose also.

"Don't let us disturb you, Mr. Williamson," said the corn-factor, very condescendingly. "Sit down again, both of you. Dr. Brixbourg is only come to make acquaintance with Clara, and we won't interrupt you long."

Dr. Brixbourg upon this, advanced, and presented his hand to the young lady, making, at the same time, some sort of civil little speech, between an apology and a compliment.

The tall, lank, dark-browed, and by no means fair-complexioned young lady to whom he thus

addressed himself, stared at him very uncere-
moniously in return ; and then reseated her-
self.

The conversation which followed was not much, and consisted wholly of little friendly phrases addressed by the father to the daughter, such as, " Well, my dear, how do you and the reverend gentleman get on together with your Latin and Greek ?"

" And, you must never forget, you know, to take your walk in the Square, Clara ;" and the like.

To each of which Miss Clara answered yes, or no, with great propriety. And when this had lasted for about seven minutes, Mr. Holmwood gave a little moan, which was an indication that he was going to move ; and then he rose from his chair, nodded his head three times, saying, " Good-bye to you all," and taking the arm of the bowing doctor, they left the room together, closing the door after them.

The going down stairs was rather a more difficult business for Mr. Holmwood than the going up ; but it was achieved at last, and the

physician and his patient were again seated *tête-à-tête* in the back drawing-room.

"Come now, doctor," said the invalid, rather coaxingly, "tell me fairly and honestly what you think of my tall girl? she is my sole heiress, you know; and even if I do get out of business directly, according to your advice, that child will have a good bit above a hundred thousand pounds for her fortune, so you must not wonder at my thinking her of some little importance. I know as well as you do, that she is not very handsome, and that she has no more colour in her cheeks than there is in her pocket-handkerchief; but I want you to tell me if you think she looks like a clever girl, and whether you think her not having a colour is any sign of ill health?"

"I'll tell you what she has got, Mr. Holmwood," replied the physician, laughing; "she has got about the finest pair of dark eyes that I ever saw in the whole course of my life, and that is saying something, I can tell you, for I am a great observer of eyes."

And as he spoke, the conscious doctor caused his own eyes, which were darker still than

Clara's, to twinkle with very becoming brightness.

"Yes," replied the father, "I know very well that she has got fine eyes; she always had from a baby; and she has got too as fine a set of teeth when she smiles, as ever was seen anywhere, unless perhaps in the window of a dentist's shop. But you can't judge of that, because she was looking so grave. She is always rather formal in her manner to strangers; however, my good sir, such as she is, she will have a fine fortune, considering that she is only a tradesman's daughter."

"ONLY!" repeated Dr. Brixbourg with what was intended to be a very courteous emphasis; and then, though he had already made rather a long visit, he again sat down with his new patient, and made himself exceedingly amusing by recounting a number of lively anecdotes, all fresh from the "West End;" and did not take his leave till he had fully convinced Mr. Holmwood that he was decidedly the most agreeable companion he had ever met with.

Meantime the quiet party up-stairs, whose

occupations had been interrupted by the unexpected visit of the new doctor, did not immediately resume their employments ; for Clara, though she did not close the volume she was reading, turned it over, and laughingly looking up into the school-master's face, said, "Now, Mr. Williamson, you must please to instruct me by a little conversation."

Upon which aunt Sarah too, laid down her needle and prepared to listen.

"Must I, my dear?" replied the grey-headed gentleman, returning her smile. "And what must the theme be?"

"I would wish your discourse to turn upon the usages of society," replied Clara. "I am aware, you know, that in your youth you were for two years a resident tutor in a very fine family, and therefore I consider you as perfectly competent to give me the information which at this moment I most particularly wish to obtain."

Mr. Williamson looked at her as if he knew she was going to be naughty, and he gravely shook his head.

"I wish you to inform me," she resumed,

“whether the visit of that new doctor (that utter, perfect, and most complete stranger) to my school-room, to my private retreat, to my own undisputed apartment,—I wish you to tell me whether this visit was in its manner more impertinent or more polite?”

“It might be more easy to tell you something else, Miss Clara,” replied the reverend tutor. “I *may* feel some doubt upon the question you have proposed to me, but there is another point on which I feel none. I can assure you with equal certainty and sincerity, that you were extremely rude in your demeanour to this visitor.”

“I suspected from a certain solemn glance which you bestowed upon me,” said Clara, “that I was going to be scolded, and it seems that I was right; for to all intents and purposes, I am scolded. But now, this duty being duly performed, have the kindness to answer my question.”

Mr. Williamson replied with great gravity, “I have already told you, Miss Clara, that there might be some difficulty in answering the question. I do not feel quite sure as to

the impulse or the motive of the gentleman alluded to, and I must therefore beg you to excuse my not giving any opinion at all on the subject."

Clara Holmwood rose, walked round the table at which they were sitting, and stood immediately opposite to him, with her raised hands tightly clasped together, and her eyes earnestly and strongly fixed on his face.

"And you are the man," she said, "upon whom, three long years ago, I fixed the erring eyes of youthful affection, because I thought you were TRUE! Do you remember all the history of the rival governesses, and their noble recommendations? And how you advised my father to let me go on with my aunt and my books, groping along as well as I could in the dark, solely because you fancied that you discerned symptoms of insincerity, or misrepresentation in their statements? And now you dare to look at me, and say that you are in doubt about the sycophantish impertinence of this new doctor!"

"At any rate, I am in no doubt about you, Miss Clara," replied the old gentleman, shak-

ing his head. "You are a spoiled child ; and whether your father, or your aunt, or your old school-master, has the most to answer for in producing this lamentable effect, I will not attempt to determine.

"Yes," replied Clara, "in many respects I am spoiled ; and I quite agree with you, Mr. Williamson, in thinking it doubtful which of the three persons you have named, has had the most active share in producing this effect. But you have been giving me a more mischievous lesson to-day, than I have ever had before, from either of you. You have been trying to teach me to say one thing, while I mean another."

This rebuke seemed for a moment to silence the old man ; but he speedily recovered his self-possession, and replied, "Your statement is incorrect, Miss Clara. I did not wish you to say anything ; but I blame you for returning what were evidently admiring glances, with scorn at least equally evident. Perhaps this new doctor really did admire you, Miss Clara, for there is no accounting for taste, you know ; and if so, your very scornful reserve and haughtiness were greatly out of place."

“Well now,” said aunt Sarah, “I must say that for once and away, I think you are wrong, sir. I saw how that bold old gentleman stared into the very eyes of my niece, as if he were going to perform some doctoring operation upon them, and I can’t say that I at all blamed Clara for her manner to him.”

“Now then, I am ready to answer your question, my dear, without any farther scruples of conscience,” said Mr. Williamson. “Your aunt Sarah does not very often utter so decided an opinion as she has given now ; but when she does, I must say that I think she is pretty generally right. And therefore, Miss Clara, I withdraw my accusation, and am willing to allow that you too were probably right, and that I was probably wrong.”

While this conversation, half jest, and half earnest, was going on in the school-room, the lengthened visit of the new physician was producing much more important effects in the drawing-room below.

He not only obtained from his patient a promise of immediately taking the steps necessary for bringing his commercial affairs to

a conclusion, but having elicited the confession that he was a devoted lover of backgammon, he made a cordial offer of passing at least one hour in every day with him, during which he would not only carefully watch his symptoms, but would indulge him at the same time with a regular daily dose of his favourite game.

The delighted corn-merchant declared himself to be more than half cured already. Nothing, he said, was so difficult as finding a pleasant companion, who would play regularly. All his acquaintance, he declared, were men of business, and therefore it was only now and then, at odd times, that he ever could get a game. For he could not teach his sister Sarah to reckon the spots on the dice correctly ; and as for Clara, she was worse still ; for although she always said she was quite, *quite* ready to play, he always found out that she sat with a book on her knee, which she contrived to hide under the table, unless he looked very sharp after it. Mr. Williamson, her schoolmaster, too, was so stupid, that he positively never could contrive

to learn even the very first rudiments of the game ; so that this offer from his benevolent physician was really invaluable.

It is unnecessary to detain the reader by recounting at length the series of seemingly trifling circumstances which finally led to the unexpected result of making the able physician thus casually called in, the most important acquaintance ever made by Mr. Holmwood.

The winding-up of his commercial concerns was promptly, and most satisfactorily achieved, and Dr. Brixbourg's prophecy that amended health would be the result, appeared for some time to be perfectly fulfilled ; for the effort necessary for the active superintendence of a large commercial concern could not be made by a sufferer of (often) acute bodily pain, without the evils both of the malady and the occupation being reciprocally increased.

Moreover, Dr. Brixbourg was more than faithful to his promise on the article of backgammon, for rarely did an evening, or a morning either, pass without his entering, with his bright pleasant smile, and placing, with no

greater ceremony than a merry nod, the ever-ready board between them. And then followed what were decidedly the most pleasureable moments of Mr. Holmwood's existence. Nor was his dearly-beloved game the only source of this enjoyment. They each, indeed, held a dice-box, and each rehearsed the throw, and obeyed it ; but this constituted but a small portion only of the sick man's consolation and enjoyment.

A skilful physician ought to have more arts than one, and Dr. Brixbourg had many more. Few men had a nicer discernment into individual character ; and as perhaps no one, save a well-practised physician, *can* be aware to what extent the talking to a man about himself may be made soothing and agreeable, none other could so safely have ventured upon the style of practice which he determined to pursue in the case of Mr Holmwood.

He had not made half-a-dozen of these long gossiping visits before he arrived at the following conclusions.

First, he became certain that chronic rheumatism was not the corn-merchant's only

malady, but that the good man's constitution was breaking up, and that he would not last long.

Secondly, he became aware, that nine-tenths of his meditations, when he was not playing backgammon, and talking of himself and his aches and pains, were devoted to the very difficult question of what was to become of his daughter and all her money, in case he should die before he had been lucky enough to find a suitable husband for her.

Now these two discoveries together suggested a very clever idea to the doctor, which became daily and hourly more attractive, the more he meditated upon it.

It was soon evident to him that his new patient's life had been almost wholly a life of drudgery and dry accumulation of capital, mixed with as little enjoyment, by way of interest from it, as it was well possible to imagine. He perceived also, that although his habits had uniformly led him to pass his life in seeking for profitable speculations, discussing such things with his partners and clerks, and eternally looking over and settling his

accounts, yet that he had evidently a strong liking for talking, and being talked to, about himself and his daughter, and of the much higher place they ought to hold in society, than they had yet done.

Finding how highly this sort of familiar gossip was relished by his patient, Dr. Brixbourg indulged him in it freely.

In truth it would have required much less skill than our West End physician possessed, to have succeeded in convincing the worthy citizen that he had never been fortunate enough to meet with so every way admirable a man before ; and despite his increasing weakness, poor old man ! the many pleasant hours thus afforded him, caused him to declare, and most sincerely to believe also, that he was in much better health than he had been for years.

This assurance, constantly repeated to his daughter and her aunt, impressed them both with a feeling of great respect for Dr. Brixbourg's medical skill, and of gratitude for the friendly, and it might be called affectionate attention, which induced him to bestow so

much of his precious time upon one who was so nearly a stranger to him.

Perhaps, too, the constantly-occupied Clara was not insensible to the benefit she also derived from the assiduous attention of this friendly physician ; for though she certainly preferred reading, with her book upon a table, in her own dear school-room, to perusing the same volume, furtively placed upon her knee beside her father's backgammon board, she was much too good a girl, and too dutiful a daughter, to have left her poor sick father alone during the many hours that she now knew to be so very pleasantly passed by him in the society of his invaluable new friend.

So far, indeed, did the complacent feelings generated by all this kind attention lead her, that she almost forgot, and quite forgave, the offensive activity of Dr. Brixbourg's eyes at their first interview ; and when, as not unfrequently happened, he socially joined their family dinner-party, she was not only civil, but almost kind in her manner towards him.

But much as the young lady was aware of the advantages she derived from her father's

having found so valuable a physician, and so kind a friend, she was very far from guessing to what a close degree of intimacy and confidence this alliance had grown.

Like all other discreet men of business, Mr. Holmwood was not, nor ever had been, in the habit of talking to the ladies of his family concerning his financial affairs, either private or commercial, and the consequence of this habit on the present occasion was very important ; for had Clara known how he was occupied during many of the hours which he passed *tête-à-tête* with Dr. Brixbourg, she would probably have interfered in a manner that would have changed the whole course of her future life.

Mr. Holmwood had certainly no idea that there was anything alarming in the present state of his health, but nevertheless he often alluded to the possibility of his not living till Clara was of age ; and upon one occasion, when this idea seemed to have taken possession of him more strongly than usual, he said to Dr. Brixbourg, "I wish, doctor, you would give me your opinion as to the best

way of providing for her comfort in case such a thing should happen."

"I see no more chance of this, Mr. Holmwood," replied the doctor, "than I do of an earthquake. It is evident to me, from what I see, and from what you tell me, that you are in better health now than you have been for many years past. But nevertheless I think you are right—perfectly right, upon a point of such importance, to leave nothing to chance. For aught that we any of us know, we may have the cholera, or the plague either, raging in the midst of us before we are a month older, and, in short, no affair of importance that we have the power of arranging for ourselves, should *ever* be left to chance to arrange for us."

This extremely wise opinion was listened to by Mr. Holmwood with all the attention it deserved; and thenceforward, for many successive days—nay, it might have been weeks—the conversation of the two gentlemen, during the intervals when the dice-box was silent, was almost wholly concerning Clara and her aunt, and the best mode of providing for the

comfort of the young girl, in case any accident should occur to deprive her of his care before she was twenty-one, and able to take care of herself.

As the result of these very friendly conferences and consultations will be made evident in the course of the narrative, it is not necessary to record all that passed during the progress of them; but whatever effect they might be destined to have upon the future, it is certain that Mr. Holmwood experienced the greatest comfort and consolation from them, while they were in progress.

CHAPTER III.

No earthquake occurred to disturb the tranquillity of English hills and valleys, nor did either plague or cholera visit them ; but nevertheless Mr. Holmwood died, and his daughter became an orphan a few days before she had completed her nineteenth year.

The shock, as well as the sorrow which her father's death occasioned her, was very great ; for Dr. Brixbourg had either been himself misled by some favourable symptoms in the old man's case, or had thought it best to flatter her with the hope that he had still many years to live ; and the event was therefore almost as unexpected as it was melancholy.

It was not till after many hours had been

given to the sadness and sorrow which such a loss was calculated to inspire, that Clara and her aunt began to meditate upon, and discuss, the immediate consequences of it to themselves.

Dr. Brixbourg was exceedingly assiduous in his attentions to them both; and after allowing what he thought to be a sufficient time for the first paroxysm of their sorrow, he announced to them that he was in possession of the will of the deceased, and that he hoped they would both feel themselves equal to the melancholy task of having it opened, and read, as soon as the funeral was over.

Clara received this notification in silence, merely bowing her head in token of assent; but the tender-hearted aunt Sarah looked in the pale face of her niece, and fancied that such a ceremony would be too severe a trial for her health and spirits.

“Is it quite necessary that it should be done directly, sir?” said the tender-hearted spinster, looking pitifully at the dejected girl.

Dr. Brixbourg looked pitifully at her too, but before he could say anything in reply,

Clara raised her head, and said with more firmness of voice than either of them expected, "Do not speak of delay upon such an occasion as this, aunt Sarah. Remember that it is my father's *will* that we are about to learn; and till I know what his wishes were respecting me, I can feel nothing but anxiety and doubt."

"Your dear Clara is right," returned Dr. Brixbourg, looking at the young girl very approvingly. "Delay could only increase her anxiety; and I have strong hopes that the will of her late excellent father will dictate nothing concerning her future movements which she will find reason to disapprove."

A slight contraction of her expressive brows would have been perceptible to her school-master, had he been present; but aunt Sarah was holding her pocket-handkerchief to her eyes, and did not see it.

Whether Dr. Brixbourg remarked it, might have been doubted by the most accurate observer; for though he was certainly looking at her very earnestly, his own countenance continued to wear the same placid expression

which belonged to the conviction he had expressed, that the will of his departed patient and friend would be found to contain nothing which his daughter could reasonably disapprove.

No further delay was suggested as to the making her acquainted with its contents ; and on the return of Dr. Brixbourg from the funeral, he found Clara and her aunt seated in sable sadness in the drawing-room, awaiting the ceremony which was to follow, and which was as strongly in contrast with that which had just been performed, as life is to death.

Clara was seated on a sofa, with her aunt beside her, and in an easy chair placed close to her on the other side, sat her "*school-master*," as it was ever her will and pleasure to call him. He had respectfully offered to attend the funeral ; but Clara's answer was, " No, no, my dear friend, you must stay with me ! If my dear father is conscious of what is passing and what is felt in the scene he has left, he would tell you not to leave me just now."

The old man was well enough disposed to

obey her ; his gentlest and warmest affections were clinging to *her*, and not to the well-meaning, but blundering old man who was gone. She had confided to him all her fears respecting the influence which she suspected Dr. Brixbourg to have obtained over him during the last two years of his life, and he so far shared these fears, as to feel that the best way of proving his affection would be by remaining with her as much as possible, and preventing her from torturing her heart and weakening her spirits, by fancying that the smiling doctor, whom she so heartily disliked, would be assigned to her as a guardian.

That such a nomination was extremely probable, Mr. Williamson was as much aware as she could be ; but he found comfort himself, and in some degree imparted it to her, from the persuasion that even if this newly-made friend was appointed to be her guardian, he would not be the only one ; and while listening to this, and acknowledging its probability, she felt the greatest consolation from knowing that as it was impossible she could dislike any other so very heartily as she disliked him ; no one

could be appointed to the office with him who would not, by comparison, appear to her in the light of a valued friend. Nay, sometimes she secretly soothed herself by believing it not very unlikely that her dearly-beloved tutor might be appointed to this important trust; and the bare idea that this was *possible*, did much towards supporting her spirits.

But never were hopes more vain, or fears more just. Everything Clara most dreaded respecting her fate for the next two years, was dictated and made law by her father's will.

As far, indeed, as the disposition and the amount of his property went, she had reason to be not only satisfied, but very agreeably surprised; for the funds rehearsed by the testator, and, with the exception of a few trifling legacies, bequeathed wholly and unconditionally to her, very greatly exceeded her idea of her father's wealth.

But this was all absolutely forgotten and lost sight of, under the heavy calamity of hearing that she was to be consigned for the space of one year, ten months, and eleven days, to

the sole charge and protection of Dr. Brixbourg.

All possible care had been taken by the well-intentioned, but blundering defunct, that the trustees appointed to the management of her large property during her minority should be in every respect judiciously chosen ; but it certainly would have been difficult for him to have fixed upon a personal guardian equally distasteful to her feelings.

Nothing, in fact, could have been more unfortunate than the line of conduct she had herself pursued respecting Dr. Brixbourg and his family during the two years that they had been acquainted. Had she disliked him less, she would probably have shown her dislike much more ; but she was unfortunately so impetuous and vehement in all her likings and dislikings, that she perpetually found herself obliged either to conceal the feelings she really experienced, or atone for those she had imprudently displayed.

Moreover, she was quite aware that her father owed many hours of alleviated suffering, if not of positive enjoyment, to the con-

stantly unremitted attention of Dr. Brixbourg ; and the consequence of this was, that Clara, though as sincere and truth-loving a girl as ever lived, never did on any occasion give her father any reason to believe that she disliked Dr. Brixbourg at all ; and much less, poor man ! had he reason to imagine that of all the persons she had ever known, he was the *last* in whose house she would wish to have resided.

Moreover, at the time he made his will he thought himself, thanks to the doctor's pleasant assurances, in a *safer* state of health than he had been for years ; and even while in the act of minutely arranging everything relative to her minority, he confidently hoped and believed, that this minority would be passed in his own house, and under his own eye.

As to the ladies of Dr. Brixbourg's family, consisting of his wife and daughter, Clara had seen them very little, and did not like them at all. His wife was a very vain and very ambitious woman, whose first object in life was to embellish her visiting list by the names of some of her husband's aristocratic patients ;

and she certainly had in some degree succeeded, in consequence of occasional hints from her every way skilful husband, that nothing touched his heart so nearly as attention and kindness to his womankind.

His daughter was rather pretty, prodigiously accomplished, and, being the only child of a very prosperous man, felt a most undoubting confidence in the splendour of her future destiny, being resolutely determined that nothing should tempt her to marry any man who could not bestow a little upon her, in return for all the beauty and all the wealth she should bestow upon him.

But it was now all too late for regret that poor Clara had not been more communicative, or more sincere in her communication with her father, concerning them; and when she remembered, upon hearing what was her destined home for the next two years, how carefully she had concealed from him all her real feelings and opinions respecting Dr. Brix-bourg and his family, she murmured, in a truly contrite spirit, the very righteous adage, "*Never do evil, that good may come of it.*"

As to all the minor arrangements made for her during her minority, she admired their liberality towards those whom he thus hired to receive her, and she loved and wept over his thoughtful kindness to herself.

The sum of two thousand pounds was bequeathed to Dr. Brixbourg, in testimony of gratitude for his kindness and attention to the comfort of a troublesome invalid ; and two thousand a-year was named as the sum which he wished to be paid to him during the minority of his daughter Clara, in case he kindly took charge of her, and afforded her a home in his house during the period of her minority ; and moreover, in case she should marry with his full approbation and consent before she became of age, he bequeathed one thousand pounds to him over and above whatever might have been previously paid to him of the two thousand a-year allowance which her trustees were directed to pay quarterly.

Thus, then, was the destiny of Clara Holmwood marked out for her during the next two years, or near it, with a precision which left no possibility of evasion.

In a codicil, which was more like a memorandum to his daughter, than a bequest to her aunt, he stated that it was his wish that his sister Sarah should never, under any circumstances, be left with an income less than five hundred a-year; but that he knew the attachment which existed between the aunt and niece too well to interfere farther between them, being quite certain that Clara would never see her good aunt wish in vain for anything which it was in her power to bestow.

And to this was appended a memorandum, stating it to be also his wish that Dr. Brix-bourg should receive an additional five hundred a-year from the trustees, in case it should be arranged that his sister Sarah should remain with his daughter Clara during her minority.

The only syllable approaching to consolation in this document, which reached the heart of poor Clara, was to be found in these words. She was still sitting beside her aunt on the sofa when these final words were read; and then the hands of the aunt and niece

silently approached each other, as by one common impulse, and the pressure given and received brought a gleam of comfort to both.

The ceremony of speech-making which was likely to follow the reading of this important document, on the part of the eloquent Dr. Brixbourg, who immediately approached his wealthy ward with an extended hand, was put a stop to by aunt Sarah in a manner which proved that her departed brother was quite right when he stated that she was not quite a fool; for considerably before the extended hand could reach the reluctant palm which it was intended to greet, she stepped between the guardian and his ward, and laying her hand on his arm with an impulse which very decidedly impelled him towards the door, she said, "Not just yet, Dr. Brixbourg! Pray don't speak to her yet!—I know her so well; and if she is not immediately left quietly to herself, she will very likely become hysterical, or something of that sort."

Whereupon Dr. Brixbourg, in his two-fold character of guardian and physician, nodded

in a most amiable and intelligent manner, and immediately left the room.

It is needless to attempt recording the lamentations of poor Clara. She really and sincerely believed herself at that moment to be one of the most unfortunate young women in the world; and unfortunate she certainly was; for all her wealth appeared in her eyes like a feather in the scale, when weighed against the present misery of living for two years in the Brixbourg family.

Mr. Williamson's quiet voice was the first sound she heard after the passionate burst of weeping had subsided to which she gave way, as soon as the door of the room was closed between her and her new guardian, who, together with the lawyer and the trustees appointed to take care of her property, had left the room with no lingering steps upon hearing aunt Sarah's announcement of Clara's probable hysterics.

"My dear, dear child!" uttered by the grey-haired schoolmaster, caused her to raise her head from the arm of the sofa on which she had been weeping, and to extend her

clasped hands towards him, as if to ask him for help in her desperate misery ; and any one who had looked at her expressive features at that moment might have been tempted to suppose, that instead of being pretty nearly the richest heiress in London, she felt herself utterly destitute, and without a gleam of hope to sustain her breaking heart !

But luckily for her feelings at that moment, poor girl ! her gentle-hearted master was more awake to the misery of her present emotions, than to any of the splendour that awaited her in future ; and, instead of blaming her for weeping, looked very much disposed to weep with her.

But, to say the truth, aunt Sarah looked at them both, as if she thought they were not quite so reasonable as she could have wished them to be ; and although the want of sympathy in our sorrows is generally considered to be an aggravation of them, neither Clara nor her tutor felt disposed to quarrel with her, when she said, “Why, it won’t last so *very* long, if we come to think of it ! Just do you look back, Clara, to two years ago, when this

cajoling doctor first came to pay us a visit. Don't it seem as if it were only yesterday? And it won't be so long, by a week or two, before you will be at liberty to make him a curtesy, and turn your back upon him for ever. And yet, to look at you now, my dear, one might fancy that you had heard of a misfortune which was to last you for life."

It would have been difficult for the greatest orator living to have pronounced a more effective speech.

Clara raised her head, and actually looked into the face of her tutor with a smile. Moreover, he returned the smile, and that so cordially, that the very heart of Clara seemed cheered by it; and suddenly throwing her arms round the neck of her aunt, she kissed her with great energy, exclaiming, "Your little sermon, aunt Sarah, will do me more good than all my riches! I shall endeavour to keep my impatient temper in order, such as I might do if I were taking a tiresome, disagreeable journey to a place which I expected to find very agreeable when I reached it. That you are to travel with me is a com-

fort for which I cannot be too thankful; and if my dear schoolmaster does not give me up, you shall both of you see that I am not such a poor, weak creature as I myself fancied I was a few minutes ago."

"Bravo! my good child!" said the old man, looking greatly comforted; "and bravo! aunt Sarah too! A word in good season is often a very great blessing to those who listen, and a blessing, too, to those who utter it. And now I think that the best thing I can do, is to leave you two quietly together, not to dwell upon your misfortunes, but to anticipate their termination; and believe me, dearest Clara, that the best way of preventing this misfortune from doing you *lasting* injury, is resolutely to determine that you will endure it patiently."

And having said this, he shook them both affectionately by the hand, and took his leave.



CHAPTER IV.

“PATIENTLY?” repeated Clara, as he closed the door after him. “I really will endeavour to behave wisely and well, during the hateful portion of my existence upon which I am about to enter. But I greatly doubt, aunt Sarah, whether, if I live through it, I shall, on looking back, be able to tell myself that I have borne it patiently. I do not *intend* to bear it patiently. The misfortune which has fallen upon me is not, in my opinion, of a nature to be relieved by patience. I think it must be met with resolution, and endured with courage. If my poor, dear father, instead of leaving me this mass of money that you all talk about, had met with losses in business before he died, and that I had unexpectedly found myself re-

duced to the necessity of doing some drudgery or other to earn my bread, it would have been my duty to have borne the misfortune with patience, and to have laboured *patiently*, day by day, to prevent myself from becoming a burthen upon the parish. Could I have succeeded in doing this—could I *patiently* have endured this daily toil, with so respectable a motive, I should have had great merit. Nay, if this odious doctor, and his odious wife, and his odious daughter, had been near connexions of my father's, and that it had been in some sort his duty to bestow upon them the pecuniary advantages which he has now bestowed upon this stranger, I should still have been called upon to endure the misfortune with patience. But I feel *no* such call upon me now. This man holds the position he has obtained for no other reason in the world than because he has been, and is, a sly, successful schemer; a character which, with my whole soul, I abominate, and which I can never contemplate or endure with *patience*. Nor would my father have endured him with more patience than myself, had he known him as well.

No, aunt Sarah, it is not with patience, but with firmness, that we must meet, and endure, this calamity ; and the constant remembrance of your precious words, ‘ it won’t last so very long,’ shall cheer my thoughts by day, and my dreams by night.”

And aunt Sarah looked at her very earnestly, and listened very attentively to every word she said ; but either she did not perfectly understand what she purposed, or did not perfectly approve it. She was too wise a woman, however, to disturb the comparative serenity of poor Clara’s spirits by any fresh doubts or fears of her own ; and their conversation then turned, very rationally, upon the best and easiest mode of ensuring the continued attendance of Mr. Williamson.

“ My poor, dear father used to fancy that I knew a great deal ; and I believe that you fancy so too,” said Clara. “ But you may safely trust to my sincerity, when I assure you, that the assistance of Mr. Williamson was never so necessary to me as it is at present. Hitherto he has been sedulously and most patiently occupied in assisting me to obtain

the use of the tools, if I may so express myself, by the help of which I hope in time to know something. In plain English, aunt, Mr. Williamson, who is an excellent linguist, has taught me more than one language ; but as yet we have had very little time to profit pleasantly by what I have learnt. My reading has hitherto been very little more than that of a child ; and it is absolutely necessary for me still to have his assistance, unless I mean to sacrifice the advantage of all I have hitherto acquired. But by all I heard about my having money in the will, it was not to take place before I became of age ; how, then, is my dear tutor to obtain the continuation of his three hundred a-year ?”

“I am sure, my dear, I don’t know,” replied aunt Sarah, shaking her head. “I don’t much think that Dr. Brixbourg would like to pay it out of his two thousand five hundred a-year that he is to have for our board, you know ; though, to be sure, it is such a monstrous sum that he might well afford to do it.”

“And is my beloved friend, Mrs. Brixbourg, to furnish my wardrobe out of this

sum? If my suits are to be chosen at her discretion, I think I shall take to my bed during the period of my minority."

"Oh, Clara, dear! how can you talk such nonsense!" exclaimed aunt Sarah. "But I remember thinking at the time that you did not hear any of the clauses that followed the arrangement about your living with the doctor. But if your poor, dear papa did blunder about *him*, it did not make him forget other people. To me, I am sure, he has been as generous as a prince; and so he always has been. I am to have five hundred pounds a-year, dating from the day of his death, besides what he has left to the doctor for my living in his house, as long as you are there. And about your dresses, my dear, you need not be afraid that Mrs. Brixbourg will have anything to do with them, for you, too, young as you are, will have five hundred a-year for your own expenses. So you see you need not take to your bed yet."

"Very well, then," replied Clara, promptly. "I shall write a note to Mr. Williamson immediately, informing him that provision has

been made for the continuance of his salary. Two hundred a-year will buy more finery for me than I shall wish to wear ; so this, to me, most important matter may be arranged without any difficulty at all."

"That it certainly may, my dear," replied aunt Sarah, in a tone that expressed a very happy conviction of the fact. "Your dear, good father," she added, "though he certainly did blunder about the guardianship, seems to have taken excellent care in all directions to make everybody comfortable about money matters. But I should take it as a very great favour, Clara, if you would let me pay half Mr. Williamson's salary. You don't think I want to spend five hundred a-year in silks and satins ; do you, dear ?"

"You *shall* pay half his salary, aunt Sarah," replied Clara, eagerly, "provided you promise me, on the word of an honest woman, that you will divide all his lessons with me. You shall begin with the Latin grammar to-morrow ; will you agree to this ?"

"I would agree to that, or to any thing else, almost, if it would make you look as saucy,

and as much like yourself again, as you do now. I do believe you would break my heart, and kill me outright, if you went on looking as you did when you first heard about the doctor! You won't look at me so again, will you, Clara?"

"No! I don't think there is any chance of it. And you may thank yourself for it," replied Clara, kissing her.

"When the blow first fell," she continued, "it knocked me down. But you picked me up again with those dear, blessed words, '*not so very long!*' and I don't much think that I shall either totter or fall any more under the weight of this unexpected affliction. Only you must remember, aunt Sarah, that I expect you to be very kind and indulgent to me, and never scold me, nor let Mr. Williamson scold me, even if it should happen that you should not always approve of what I do or say. For, indeed and indeed, aunt Sarah, you ought both of you to remember, that though to avoid plaguing both you and him, I may try to make the best of it; yet, still the having to live for two years with the people one most

dislikes in the world, is a misfortune; and, therefore, that the helpless victim of such an arrangement ought to be treated with a little indulgence, even if . . .” and there she stopped.

“If what, my dear?” said her aunt, looking at her with something like alarm in the expression of her placid countenance.

“Oh! I can’t tell exactly, you know, what may happen to me, or how much I may require indulgence. I only mean, that if it *should* happen that my temper should get the better of me . . . And you know, aunt Sarah, that I am not lucky enough to have such a good temper as yours; so, if it *should* ever happen that I betrayed, either by looks or words, what I ought to conceal, I do hope that you, and my dear old schoolmaster too, will be indulgent and forgiving.”

There was an odd mixture of feelings on the expressive features of Clara as she said this, which might have left it in doubt to most people who had looked at her, as to whether she were in jest or earnest: but neither her aunt nor her schoolmaster could have so blun-

dered ; that she was quite in earnest would have been equally evident to both, had both been present.

On the whole, however, both these fondly attached friends had the consolation of believing that she had become more reconciled to the injudicious arrangement which had been made for her, than they had ventured to hope for ; and certain it is, that although she had refused to pledge herself to the patient endurance of the evils which beset her, she had sufficient good sense, and sufficient command of temper also, to take her part in all the preliminary steps which were necessary to her change of abode, without betraying any outward and visible signs of the pain it cost her.

This change, however, could not take place immediately, as Dr. Brixbourg and his lady both declared that their present residence was in no way a suitable home for Miss Holmwood : and perhaps they were right ; for though their house was a very showy little mansion in Curzon Street, it could not furnish such accommodation for Miss Holmwood, and her aunt Sarah, as their payment of two thousand

five hundred per annum might fairly be thought to require.

The house to which the doctor's family was now removed with all possible celerity, was a very handsome one in Portman Square; and no inconsiderable portion of the cleverness which I have attributed to the guardian of my heroine, was now displayed by him in the manner of his contriving to convey to it all the most modern and costly articles of the late Miss Holmwood's furniture, under the pretence of his ward's being "particularly attached to them;" a reason for so disposing of this portion of the young lady's property, to which it was quite impossible her friendly trustees could object.

The house taken was one which had been very recently fitted up; and the removal of the furniture from the two houses about to be quitted, as well as such new purchases as the ambitious Mrs. Brixbourg considered necessary for the brilliant position which she now expected to hold in society,—all this was arranged and completed with less delay than so great a revolution would have required by

any family less energetic than that of Brixbourg.

But it would be difficult to say which of the three, whether father, mother, or daughter, was the most vigorous in the efforts necessary to achieve this important work; and when there are three such peculiarly active individuals of one mind in a house, any, and every, metamorphosis of the said house may be easily accomplished.

This great work completed, and Miss Holmwood installed in the best sleeping apartment of the new mansion, the Brixbourg trio lost not an hour in commencing the system of operations, by which they intended to turn this great event in their life's history to the best and most profitable account.

But, before I attempt to describe any of these manœuvres, one little anecdote respecting Clara must be given, as a specimen of the peculiarity of her character, in more ways than one.

The bed-room appointed for her use was, as I have already stated, the best in the house; but the one allotted to aunt Sarah, was, if not

the worst in the house, very decidedly the worst, with the exception of those appropriated to the servants.

On the night which followed their arrival, both aunt and niece slept in the rooms prepared for them respectively, the aunt being escorted to her apartment by the blooming Miss Anastasia, and the niece by the lady of the house herself.

On the following morning, when Clara's old servant, who had been her nurse, before she was converted into a lady's maid, came to assist her in dressing, Clara asked her whereabouts aunt Sarah's room was.

"Why, I think, Miss, that it is just right over this, only it's two stories higher," replied Susan.

Clara said nothing in answer to this; but when her toilet was completed, and she was about to leave her room, in order to seek the breakfast-table, she said, "Do not unpack any of my things yet, Susan; I will see you again after breakfast, and then I will tell you where I will have all the things put."

But before she returned to her own room,

she gave notice to aunt Sarah, upon quitting the breakfast-table, that it was her wish and intention to make a visit to hers.

“What for, my dear child?” replied the old lady. “It is very nice and comfortable when you get there, but it is a long way to go up for nothing.”

“Very well, aunt Sarah; then you may stay where you are. I must see your room, but there is no need for you to go with me. I have no doubt I shall be able to find it without you. Susan knows where it is.”

And so saying, the young lady walked with rather a rapid step towards the door.

But aunt Sarah was quite capable of taking a rapid step also; and before the door was reached, the arm of the old lady was passed under that of the young one, and they ascended a good many stairs together. But then the speed of aunt Sarah relaxed, and she withdrew her arm.

“How you gallop!” exclaimed the old lady, panting. “I must take breath, Clara, before I set off again.”

Upon this, Clara stood by her as motionless

as one of the banisters ; but she shook her head as she watched the hard breathing of the old lady ; and if her schoolmaster had seen her, he would have said that she looked even more angry than sorry.

At length, however, they reached the top of the house ; one of the four doors which surrounded them was opened by the old lady, and the aunt and niece entered together.

The room certainly deserved the praise which aunt Sarah had bestowed upon it, for it was very neatly furnished, and looked comfortable.

The old lady sat down to recover her breath, while the young one looked about her.

“ Yes ! if it had another wardrobe, which would easily find room somewhere or other, it would do very well. After all, you know, dear aunt, it is not for VERY LONG. ”

Having uttered which salutary words, she kissed her aunt very lovingly, and then turned to leave the room, but came back to say, “ I hope you have not forgotten your promise to go shopping with me this morning ? ”

“ Indeed I have, my dear ! I do not even

recollect that you asked me," replied aunt Sarah.

"Oh, but you must go, dearest! I want fifty things, I do assure you; and I can't go out by myself, can I?"

"No, my dear, no. I will go with you willingly. But have you spoken about the carriage, Clara? The doctor said the carriage was to be always at your service; but I suppose you must always give notice when you want it."

"I shall never want his carriage at all, aunt Sarah—I shall always have a carriage from a livery-stable. His carriage has so much the look of a pill-box to my fancy, that I don't like to get into it, for fear the doctor should give me to one of his patients to swallow. Trust to me, and to this little man, Friday, whom they have hired for me, about a carriage, now and always (that is to say, for the *little always*, which is not to last long), and you shall see that I shall manage admirably."

"Well, my dear, perhaps you are right," replied the old lady; "I don't mean about

the carriage being like a pill-box, because, of course, that's nonsense; but about the not using it; for the doctor himself, you know, may be very likely to want it."

"Exactly so, aunt Sarah; and it was very thoughtful and proper of me, was it not, to be so considerate?" returned her niece. "You will always find me very thoughtful about the doctor, and all his family," she added, drawing herself up with an air of very dignified gravity; "and I hope you will always give me credit for intending to do what is right and proper towards him, and the ladies of his race. And now then, dearest of aunts, prepare yourself for a nice long drive. I shall be ready in ten minutes, and I dare say the carriage will be here in five." And so saying, she vanished into her room, at the door of which the above sentences had been discreetly muttered between them.

The carriage which Clara had previously sent her man Friday to bespeak, speedily made its appearance, and the aunt and niece took *tête-à-tête* possession of it.

"Is not this better than for you and I to

go out alternately, perhaps, in the doctor's pill-box?" said Clara. "We need not whisper here, you know, but may talk as much treason as we like. Don't you like it best, aunt Sarah?"

"Why yes, my dear, I can't say but what I do think it more agreeable. It is but natural, you know, that I should feel more happy and comfortable with you, than with anybody else. But what shall we do if your guardian should object to it, Clara?"

"Pray, pray, pray, do not always remind me of my miseries, aunt Sarah, by calling him my GUARDIAN. Call him the doctor, as I do. I can bear *that*, a great deal better. And as to the doctor's objecting to my going out with my own aunt, and attended by the servant whom he has himself hired for me, I do not think he will venture. My poor, dear father used to laugh at me, because, as he said, I wanted to study everything; but somehow or other I never took it into my head to study law, and the consequence of this culpable omission on my part is, that I do not know quite so well as I should like to do, what the

doctor has a right to make me do, and what he has not. I have either heard of such a thing though, or I have dreamed it, and upon my word I don't know which, that wards sometimes have a right to change their guardians; and if he plagued either of us very much, you know, we might try that scheme, if we could but find out how it was done."

"Oh! my dear, darling child!" exclaimed aunt Sarah, in a voice of dismay, "I know perfectly well how it is done! It is done by the ward's going to law with the guardian! Oh! Clara, Clara! will you really go to law with him? Think what a dreadful thing it will be if the first act of your life is the going to law with your guardian!"

"Upon my honour, aunt Sarah, I don't want to go to law with him," said Clara; "and, instead of its being the first thing I shall do, you may depend upon it, I shall do a great many things before I think of it. Make yourself easy, aunt, about the lawsuit. In the first place, I have no taste for it myself. It would be a confession of my own

utter helplessness ; and I do assure you, that I have no such feeling. And as for the doctor, you may take my word for it, that he would give his consent to my being driven in a wheel-barrow, rather than mar the wish of going to law with me."

"I think there's something in that!" returned the old lady, taking a deep breath, as if relieved from a very painful sensation of alarm.

Clara, on getting into the carriage, had ordered it to drive to a bookseller's ; and after executing her errand there, she said, "And now, aunt, where would you like to go?"

"Wherever you please, my dear," was the reply. "Did you not tell me that you had shopping to do?"

"Did I?" said Clara, laughing. "Well ! and I have shopped, haven't I? I have nothing more to do in that line just at present. I will tell you what I should like, aunt. I should like to drive to Hampstead ; and when we have got to the top of the hill,

I should like to get out and walk. Do you not think it would do us good?"

"Yes, indeed, my dear, I think it would be a very good plan," replied the good lady, cheerfully.

"And should you have any objection to our calling at Mr. Williamson's lodgings, in Tottenham Court Road," said Clara, "and asking him to go with us?"

"No, indeed, Clara," replied her kind-hearted aunt, very cordially; "I think it would do good to his health, and give pleasure to his mind; for, in truth, I do believe he loves you almost as well as if you were his own child."

"Yes, aunt," returned Clara, with something like bitterness in her tone; "and there it is that I feel my penance press me most severely. I think you must have some little notion, without my talking about it, of the pleasure I have had for years past in being kind to that dear old man. But it is impossible for you, or for any one else, to know, or even to guess, how much I owe him! I am quite conscious that I am not good for

much, as it is ; but without him I should have been a very poor animal indeed !”

“ Don’t speak of yourself in that way, my dear,” said aunt Sarah, very gravely. “ I don’t like to hear you call yourself an animal !”

“ You are right. It is a foolish phrase, and means nothing. But there *is* meaning in my saying that I am very unhappy, because it is no longer in my power to pet my dear old schoolmaster, and make him as comfortable as I did when poor papa was alive.”

“ We don’t know yet, my dear—we don’t know yet. The doctor has so often seen him at dinner with us, that I should think he could hardly help asking him, now and then, when the time comes that we shall be settled enough for you to begin your lessons regularly again, according to agreement.”

“ And much enjoyment it would be to him ! You don’t suppose Mr. Williamson would condescend to converse familiarly with such people as Mrs. and Miss Brixbourg, do you, aunt Sarah ?”

“ Condescend, my dear, is such an odd word to use, that I don’t know how to answer

you. It is likely enough, perhaps, that he might not like their talk as well as he does yours; but as to his *condescending*, I don't know what to say about that. They are such very grand people, you know. I really don't think they could speak ten words together without one's hearing the name of a lady or a gentleman of title."

"Very true; and that, you know, would not be likely to amuse Mr. Williamson. But here we are at his door! And there he is at his window, wondering, no doubt, that people grand enough to drive in a carriage should come to so humble a mansion as this! The shop is a house, isn't it? My papa, you know, never had anything to do with a shop, had he? He always kept his goods in a warehouse!"

Mr. Williamson readily, and, as it seemed, joyfully, accepted Clara's invitation to drive and to walk; and the excursion proved so agreeable, that the young lady returned to her strange new home, apparently in better spirits than she had enjoyed since she first entered it.

CHAPTER V.

THE aunt and niece mounted the stairs together ; and on arriving at the door of one of the four rooms which occupied the first floor, and which had been assigned to Miss Holmwood as her sleeping apartment, aunt Sarah nodded her head in token of a temporary farewell, and prepared to continue her progress up the stairs. But Clara stopped her by saying, " You must come in here with me for one moment, if you please, aunt."

The old lady obeyed with great docility, and entered the door which was thrown open for her by her niece. Aunt Sarah had a tolerably quick eye ; and the first thing she saw, as she went in, was the black silk gown and the white crape cap, in which it was her purpose to invest herself, in order to meet the

grand family—with whom she had at present the honour of being domesticated—at dinner.

Susan, the *ci-devant* nurse, and now the elected waiting-woman of Clara, stood beside the bed, and appeared to be arranging gloves, and scarf, and so forth, beside the silk dress.

“What have you brought all this down here for, Susan?” said the old lady, looking at her with considerable surprise. “If there is anything wanting to be done to the things, you could have seen to it in my room, without lumbering my niece’s bed with them.”

Susan said nothing in reply, but looked smilingly at her young mistress.

“Don’t scold me, dear aunt! nor Susan either; but we have taken the liberty of making a little alteration, which we think will be an improvement,” said Clara; adding, with a kiss,—“I have a pair of lungs, aunt Sarah, as strong as those of a mountain goat, and I am not twenty years old yet; and you are rather delicate in your chest, and are twice twenty and a half, you know. Now, then, tell us sincerely, which of the two ought to sleep at the top of the house—you or I?”

“My dear, dear child! what can I say to you?” exclaimed the old lady. “It cannot be, Clara! Indeed, indeed, it cannot be! If there was nobody to be consulted about it but you and I, it would be quite a different thing; and though I might feel something painful-like in seeing you change a pleasant room for one not so pleasant, I know you well enough to be certain, that pleasant or not pleasant, you would like it best, just because it was worst, and I should let you have your own dear, kind, wilful way, as I have often and often done before, for the same sort of reason. But *now*, you know, it is altogether different! Your guardian would no more let such a precious ward as you are, sleep in a garret, than he would let her majesty the queen sleep there. So don’t frighten me, dearest, by saying any more about it; but just let Susan and Joseph move all the things back again as they were before.”

The complexion of Clara, as she listened to this speech, underwent a very remarkable alteration; it was usually complained of, even by those most inclined to give her credit for

good looks, as being too pale ; but the warm glow which now mantled her delicate cheeks, showed that this defect might, upon occasion, be remedied in a manner to make her look exceedingly beautiful. There was, moreover, a flashing brightness in her eye, instead of its usual expression of tranquil thoughtfulness, which many people might have considered as being also extremely beautiful. But her aunt, as it seemed, was not one of these ; for her own features expressed considerably more of alarm than admiration.

In short, she saw that her dearly-beloved niece was extremely angry, and was therefore considerably more sorry than surprised by the outbreak which followed.

“ Aunt Sarah ! ” she began, “ you know better than any one, excepting my dear school-master, how thoroughly, and from the very bottom of my heart, *I detest my guardian*, and also the odious women belonging to him ; and you know also that, partly out of reverence to the memory of my poor father, and partly that I might not harass *you*, and a little, perhaps, from a feeling of propriety on my own

account, I have made up my mind to endure my position without making any effort to change it. But if you tell me that, by remaining his ward, I put myself under his moral as well as his legal control, I give you notice that I will *not* endure it; and that I will immediately take whatever steps may be necessary, in order to ascertain whether it be possible or not possible for me to emancipate myself from such intolerable bondage."

No witness of this scene, if perfectly unprejudiced in every way, could have doubted for a moment of the genuine good feeling which had led to it; but, on the other hand, none such could have denied that there was a good deal of self-willed vehemence in the manner in which it was displayed.

The deed she had done was not a bad deed, nor was it badly explained, or defended; but the uncompromising manner in which it had been achieved, alarmed aunt Sarah not a little, and caused her, though no great diver into futurity, to anticipate a somewhat unquiet interval, before the haughty-looking young lady who stood before her should have attained the sober age of twenty-one.

Perhaps her alarming anticipations on this point might have taken a stronger hold on her imagination, had not her fears for the future been in a great degree overpowered by the sort of admiring wonder with which she contemplated her niece at the present moment. And in truth, had her poor father been alive, and looking at her at that same moment, he would scarcely have known her.

Her education had been a very strange one ; for while it had led her considerably beyond the limits usually fixed, as the *ne plus ultra* of female education in some respects, it had left her very considerably behind-hand in others. She could read Latin with as great facility and enjoyment as either French or English ; but as to what might be generally considered as the fittest tone of manners for a young lady to adopt in all the various situations in which accident might place her, she had never received any instruction whatever ; and had no guide to direct her, but her own feelings.

Fortunately both for herself and her friends, she was not an ill-tempered girl ; but she was high-spirited, warm-hearted, and quickly sen-

sitive to all emotions, either of pleasure or of pain, of liking or disliking.

But this quickness had no mixture of volatility in it, and any impression once strongly made upon her judgment or feelings, was generally lasting.

Her dislike to the family of which she was now so reluctantly an inmate, did not appear likely to be an exception to this, and instead of becoming less, appeared unfortunately to increase the more she saw of them.

However paradoxical it may seem, it is certainly a fact, that one great cause of this, was their apparent adoration of herself, and of everything she did, and of everything she said.

Had their usual manner to others been all of the same tone, Clara might have been less annoyed by it ; but this was very far from being the case. Dr. Brixbourg himself was indeed always rather a remarkably civil, not to say affectionate person, in manner ; but his wife particularly *wished* to be considered **PROUD**, and his daughter was really and truly one of the most insolent, as well as one of the very vainest girls that ever existed ; but in

their tone to Clara they were all alike—all sycophants, all flatterers, all worshippers ; and the feeling which she bestowed upon them all in return, had in like manner little or no shade of difference, for she disliked them all equally, and *most heartily*.

Such being the case, it was not very extraordinary that her aunt's words, " Don't frighten me, dearest ! But just let Susan and Joseph move all the things back again," produced an effect very decidedly the contrary to what was intended by her.

We are often told that the first falling in love is an important epoch in existence, and that the whole character frequently appears changed by it. Perhaps the first time of falling into anger, may also be an important epoch, and produce as great a change.

If this was ever the case with any one, it certainly was the case with Clara Holmwood now. Her heart beat, all her pulses throbbed with unwonted violence ; her colour heightened, her eyes flashed, and she suddenly looked taller, by an inch or two, than she had ever appeared before. Her good and loving aunt looked

at her with astonishment, which, however, was certainly not unmixed with admiration ; but after the silent gaze of a few seconds, she said, " Don't look so stately at me, dearest Clara ! I shall really grow to be afraid of you, if you do. "

The answer she received to this, was a loving kiss, the arms of her beautiful niece being clasped round her as she received it.

" No ! aunt Sarah, no ! " replied Clara ; " we shall never grow to be afraid of one another. I know you, and you know me, too well for that. Were I without you in this hateful house, I dare say I might be tempted to do, and to say, many things which I shall not do, or say now. But this will not be because I am *afraid* of you, but because I am afraid of giving you pain. And in like manner, dearest aunt, you will permit me, occasionally, to express my opinions, not because you are afraid of me, but because you would be afraid to pain me. So now let me enjoy the happiness of seeing you make yourself as comfortable in this room as it is possible you should be anywhere, beneath the shelter of a

roof that most assuredly is dear to neither of us."

The old lady's only answer was another kiss, for she knew her niece too well to doubt her stedfast perseverance in the resolution she had taken ; but when Clara was in the act of leaving the room, she said in rather a timid whisper, " Let it all pass as quietly as you can, dearest ! Of course they will find it out, and of course they will be very angry."

Clara smiled. " Or at any rate very much vexed, you know," resumed aunt Sarah, very coaxingly ; " but if you treat it all civilly, it may pass off, and only be considered as a proof of your over-great kindness to me."

" Oh yes, dear ! It will be sure to pass off," said Clara. " But remember, if they attack you about it, that all you have to do is to tell the exact truth, and just shake your dear old head, as you do at me sometimes, when I am very naughty, and when you know you cannot help yourself."

And having pronounced these final instructions, Clara endeavoured to cheer her really frightened aunt by a gay nod, and closing the

door behind her, flitted up the stairs like a lapwing.

The operation of dressing for dinner was not accomplished upon the persons of Mrs. Brixbourg and her daughter without their being both informed of the astounding transaction which had taken place in the house.

Miss Holmwood's man, Joseph, who had assisted in the exchange of all the properties respectively belonging to the aunt and niece, had made a confidential, but very full report of the transaction, to the communicative individual who enjoyed the office of personal attendant upon Mrs. Brixbourg and her daughter ; and seldom has any reporter been listened to with more earnest attention.

But the emotions produced by the narrative were very different. The mother listened to it with dismay ; the daughter with rage.

Mrs. Brixbourg, whose toilet was the first visited by the narrator, hastened its operations as much as possible, and then hurried down stairs to the doctor's professional sanctum, where it was his custom to receive his patients, and listen to the occasional lectures of his lady.

She now rushed in upon him "with the freedom of a wife," to use the words of King Leontes, and startled him so much by her manner of exclaiming, "What on earth are we to do now?" that the tie of his white cravat, upon which he was at that moment engaged, was completely deranged by it.

"What is the matter, my dear?" he exclaimed in his turn; "I really do wish you would not be so tremendously vehement."

"Vehement? It is the vehemence of terror, Dr. Brixbourg! I have very, *very* strong reasons, for believing that we shall not long retain your wealthy ward as an inmate; and just give one thought towards the utter ruin which will ensue if she goes!"

The doctor stared at her in silence for about ten seconds, and then replied with a good deal of dignity, "My dear, she can't go."

"I have no faith in your law, Dr. Brixbourg, whatever I may have in your physic," returned the lady; "and you will not find it very easy to persuade me that if that proud-looking girl takes it into her head, with her monstrous allowance in her pocket, and that

of her aunt to help it out, you won't persuade me that she may not find means, by hook or by crook, to get away from us, if once she takes it into her head to wish it."

"I don't agree with you, Mrs. Brixbourg," replied the doctor very firmly, though in a tone that was not much above a whisper. "We are very particularly respectable people, my dear, and moreover, we have no young men whatever related to us; and I perfectly well know that every chancellor thinks it his particular and especial duty to attend to *that*. Now when, in addition to all this, we remember that she is here by the express will and command of her father, whose happy departure from this sinful world has put it out of his power to change his mind; when we remember all this, I say that we have no reason whatever to alarm ourselves, by fancying that we are in any danger of losing our amiable inmate."

"Amiable!" muttered the doctor's lady between her closed teeth. "I do think she is the most disagreeable girl I ever became acquainted with in the course of my whole life."

“Not so, my dear, not quite so,” replied her gentle husband. “I dare say, my love, that there may be, in this wide world of ours others who may be more disagreeable still. Not that I mean to say, when speaking as confidentially as I am now speaking to you, that I think Miss Holmwood an agreeable young person. I certainly do not. My opinion of her is now exactly what it has always been. I thought from the very first moment, when her silly old father took me to look at her, that she was one of the most disagreeable young people I ever saw. And as to beauty, you know, we are both of us spoiled on that point. This proud heiress has fine eyes, and fine teeth, there is no denying that; but she is no more to be compared to Anastasia in point of beauty, than a farthing rushlight is to the sun!”

“That is true as gospel,” replied his wife, “and that is one reason among a hundred others, why it would be so dreadful for her to go! If she was a sort of person likely to eclipse Anastasia, I really don’t believe I should think her money worth having; for I could not endure a rival *there*, I promise you.”

“ We should none of us like that, I fancy,” returned the doctor, laughing. “ But you have not told me yet, my dear, what has happened to make you suppose she wants to run off?”

Mrs. Brixbourg’s reply to this was a very correct statement of the facts upon which her alarm was founded ; and the doctor certainly did not listen to this without looking considerably annoyed, if not positively alarmed.

“ The house is so new to me from one end of it to the other,” said he, “ that I don’t very well understand now, what sort of place you contrived to put the old lady into. Was it really very bad, my dear? If so, I must venture to say that I think you were wrong. Let me rather say injudicious—it surely was injudicious, my dear love.”

“ It is a sin and a shame to say so, Dr. Brixbourg!” returned the angry lady, her large, fierce, though once handsome features, expressing the most vehement indignation. “ I never was wrong in my life, and you know it, sir, as well as I do! If there had been anything wrong or injudicious in the business,

it is your daughter's doing, and not mine, and I strongly advise you to think twice before you bring such an accusation against HER."

"You know perfectly well, my sweet love, that I am not in the habit of bringing accusations against either of you; but I should just like to know, if you will have the kindness to tell me, what sort of room it is that this troublesome old lady has refused to sleep in?"

"And there you are wrong again, as usual," returned his wife. "The troublesome old lady, as you call her, is not the least bit troublesome in the world. It is not in her, poor stupid old soul! It is the precious niece, who has thought proper to undo all that we have been doing for her comfort, ungrateful, pale-faced, ugly creature as she is! We gave her the very best room in the house for herself, though the toilet-table has exactly the light that Anastasia likes best to dress by, but, dear creature, she gave it up at once, when I reminded her of the balls we may now be able to give; and the only return we get for it, is to find that the house has been

turned topsy-turvy, in order to put the poor quiet old lady into the best room, while, just as if to insult us, the heiress has poked herself into the other room, which is at the very top of the house."

"You don't mean to say that Miss Holmwood is sleeping in a garret!" exclaimed Dr. Brixbourg, deriving courage even from the extremity of fear, and looking more nearly angry than he had ever ventured to do since the hour in which he first pledged his faith at the altar.

"Don't look so like a tiger at me!" returned his lady, with an aspect which might have made Hector tremble; "I have done nothing from first to last but just try to please everybody; and now I am to be glared at, as if I were going to be torn to pieces in my own house."

The door of the doctor's mis-named sanctum was thrown open at this moment, and Miss Anastasia Brixbourg entered, beaming upon her admiring parents with the almost-insupportable effulgence of beauty, elegance, and anger united.

This young lady who had recently completed her twenty-third year, "was more than common tall," and possessed perhaps somewhat more than a common portion of personal beauty. Fair-complexioned, blue-eyed, and light-haired women are oftener, I believe, gentle in their temper than the reverse; but this was not the case in this young lady; for although she was decidedly light-eyed, light-haired, and of very delicate complexion, she was one of the most violent-tempered beauties that ever was born.

The light colouring was evidently inherited from her father; the moral features were as evidently derived from her mother. But all that nature had bestowed upon her, either of good or evil, seemed to have been exaggerated by the circumstances in which she was placed. Had she been one of many children, instead of being the first, and last, and only offspring of her adoring parents, she would have escaped the ruinous indulgence which had taught her from her earliest infancy to believe that she was upon all occasions in which she was concerned the individual who was the

most important, and the most deserving of deference and attention.

This belief had so grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength, that at the age of twenty-three, it would have been very difficult to convince her that any one who did not comply with her wishes as soon as they were expressed, ought to be, or would be forgiven, or excused, upon any plea which it was possible for the offending individual to offer.

It has been already mentioned that this high-spirited young lady had set her heart upon becoming the wife of some titled gentleman. This earnest desire had probably arisen from the consciousness that she already possessed all the consideration which personal superiority could give her, and that the only way of increasing the homage she received was by adding the prefix of LADY to her name.

It is easy to believe that Miss Brixbourg, such as I have described her, was not very likely to approve the introduction of an inmate to her father's house, who might, from her large fortune, though possessed of no other

attraction, prove a dangerous rival among that class from whom she was determined to select the partner of her future life. And violent indeed was her opposition when the arrangement was first stated to her; nor was it till her father had confessed to her the very disagreeable fact that younger men were but too successfully competing with him in his medical practice, and that it would be impossible for him to continue his present expensive mode of living without in some way increasing his income, that she would condescend to listen to a single word in favour of the scheme.

But when he had at length succeeded in making her believe that if she gave him permission to receive his ward as an inmate, he would be enabled to take, and furnish, a handsome mansion, and to indulge her with as many dinners and balls as she chose to give, she yielded, though not very graciously; firmly resolved, however, never to permit her own superiority in every respect—save in the vulgar article of wealth—to be disputed for an instant by this unwelcome inmate.

There were moreover two important considerations which completely reconciled her, after a little solitary meditation upon them, to the new arrangement. The first of these was naturally enough suggested by the absence of everything like animation both in the countenance, and the manner of Clara. She had often been told that one reason why her own beauty was so irresistibly attractive, arose from her enchanting brilliance and vivacity; and she enjoyed the comfortable certainty that such a being as herself had no cause to fear the rivalry of such a pale, cold piece of still life as Clara Holmwood.

Her second reason for submitting to the presence of her father's disagreeable ward, arose from the conviction that the enlarged field for display which the income she brought would open, could not fail of so speedily producing the result she looked for, as to render the enduring some trifling degree of annoyance from her presence of very little comparative importance.

For the last four or five years, in fact, the beautiful Anastasia had become fully persuaded

that nothing but the restricted circle in which she moved prevented her from receiving proposals from the only class of aspirants to whom she would condescend to listen.

But although these considerations had induced her to consent to her father's receiving his wealthy ward into his house, they could not prevent her disliking the arrangement ; and no sooner had the larger mansion been taken which was to enable the Brixbourg family to accommodate their guest, than a very considerable degree of irritation was manifested on the part of Miss Anastasia upon her learning that not only was the best bed-room in the house allotted to the little-loved ward, but that the third best, which she had mentally allotted to herself, was to be appropriated to the little-loved ward's old aunt.

In order to calm the tempest produced by this discovery, Mrs. Brixbourg had immediately recourse to the form of words which she invariably used when terrified by her daughter's displaying a temper still more violent than her own. "MANAGE IT ALL YOURSELF THEN!"

And, as usual, the young lady obeyed this

command very implicitly ; and the consequence was, that the somewhat aged, and very short-winded aunt Sarah, had a room allotted to her at the very top of the house.

On learning from the maid who assisted her in dressing for dinner, that this "horrid old woman and her detestable niece" had dared to change rooms, in utter defiance of the propriety which had dictated her own arrangement, and which obviously pointed out the absolute necessity of accommodating a rich young lady with more care than a poor old one, the anger of the beautiful Anastasia burst forth so vehemently, as to render the moment necessary for the fastening her dress one of perfect agony to her ; and no sooner was this accomplished, than she rushed down the stairs, and into her father's *sanctum*, with a vehemence extremely like that of a thunder-bolt.

"Do you mean to suffer this?" were the words she uttered as she violently closed the door behind her. "If these vulgar low-bred wretches choose to have the drawing-room turned into the kitchen, and the kitchen into

the drawing-room, do you mean to submit to it? Just answer me that question, and I shall know at once what is to become of me. If you permit this outrage, I shall immediately leave the house, and go out as a governess."

It would be difficult to say whether the blue-eyed father, or the black-eyed mother, looked the most completely dismayed by this address. Poor people! They really were both of them, greatly and about equally, to be pitied, for they equally doted upon their fierce daughter, and equally coveted the profit arising from the presence of their wealthy ward.

The troubled eyes of the anxious parents were fixed for many seconds upon the handsome, but almost terrific features of their daughter, before either of them could summon courage enough to speak a word in reply to the astounding harangue she had addressed to them.

At length, however, her father rose from his chair, and was evidently preparing to say something, when his wife laid her hand upon his arm, to stop him, exclaiming at the same

moment with considerable eagerness ; “ let me answer her, Dr. Brixbourg. You know we are two to one, and if you don’t agree with us, we shall be sure to beat you, for you may depend upon it, that Anastasia and I shall not differ.”

And then, rising up, she opened a drawer on the other side of the table, and drew thence a large sheet of writing paper, entirely covered by a list of names.

“Anastasia !” she said, with a good deal of solemnity, “ we must make up our minds upon this matter at once, and whatever resolution we take, we must adhere to it, for nothing could be so bad for us, in every way, as vacillation. The question, my dear, lies in a nutshell. We have only to decide whether we will endure this disagreeable girl, and keep her here, or resolve not to endure her, and send her off. Now it is my decided opinion, that your feelings and judgment on this point ought not only to be consulted, but complied with *implicitly*, for the question concerns you infinitely more than it does us. As to myself, I declare to you that if my voice was to decide

it, I should be sadly puzzled to know on which side to give my vote, and I really believe your father would say the same."

"Quite true," said the gentle doctor, in reply to the appealing look of his wife.

"Well then" resumed the judicious Mrs. Brixbourg, "it is for *you* to decide, Anastasia, whether we are to be bored with this troublesome girl, for the sake of her money, or whether we shall get rid of her, and return to our old ways of going on." Here she continued placing the list of names before her daughter. "I have written down the principal people whom I thought we might invite for the ball we have been talking about. You will find the names and the titles of several young men whom I have never ventured to invite before; but with such a house as we have got now, and with such music, and all the rest of it, as we should be perfectly well able to give, if this girl stays, I feel pretty sure that none of those we should choose to invite, will be at all inclined to stay away. Now then, Anastasia, let us hear your opinion."

The fiery flashing of the young lady's eyes

gradually subsided into a brightness less painful to look at, as her mother's harangue proceeded ; and having paused for a moment after it was concluded, she replied in a tone of great decision, " Well, then, ma'am, my opinion is, that the wisest way will be for us to try for a few months how the experiment will answer. We may all go on hating her, I suppose, as much as we like, for that will cost nothing ; and as to all the rest . . . we shall see."

The oracle had spoken. The parents exchanged a satisfactory glance of approval, and the conference was brought to a conclusion by the entrance of a servant to announce that dinner was on the table, and the staying ladies coming down the stairs.

CHAPTER VI.

THE very judicious manner in which this difficult affair had been managed by Mrs. Brixbourg, received its due reward. Her acquaintance increased, her parties flourished, and neither herself, her husband, nor her daughter, could be said seriously to entertain any doubt but that the splendid alliance anticipated for the latter would be brought about at no very distant period.

Their wealthy inmate gave them, on the whole, very little trouble. An attempt was once made by Mrs. Brixbourg to induce her to return to the apartment originally allotted to her, by proposing to fit up the little third drawing-room as a sleeping room for her aunt; but this was negatived in a tone at once so

quiet and so positive as to render it evidently useless, and therefore evidently unwise, to recur to the subject; and so, to the secret delight of Miss Anastasia, this *millionaire* young lady continued, as long as she remained in the house, to be lodged in a small garret at the top of it.

And assuredly it was best that so it should be; for Clara was as well pleased at having overcome the opposition she had anticipated, without having recourse to the lord chancellor, as the equally resolute Anastasia could be to have so quietly, yet triumphantly, retained possession of the snug apartment she had selected for her own use.

Whether Clara became in any degree less annoyed by the unlucky choice which her father had made of a home for her during her minority, or whether she resolutely determined to utter no more complainings on the subject, it may be difficult to say; but neither her aunt nor her faithful friend Mr. Williamson heard any more about it; and days, weeks, and months wore away with nothing very ostensibly important to mark their progress.

Nevertheless they left their traces behind them.

During the life of her father, Clara had seen much less of her fellow-creatures of any rank than most girls of her age; but now the case was greatly altered, for the Brixbourg family, faithful to the great object they had in view, lived in a constant round of visiting and receiving.

Their friends and acquaintance were, as will always be the case in such circumstances, a very mixed set; but there was certainly a good deal of cleverness displayed in the manœuvrings by which they threw away the worser half of it, and lived the purer (or finer) with the other half. But concerning all such manœuvrings Clara knew nothing, and cared nothing. She permitted herself to be amused, and she permitted herself to be interested and enlightened too, when opportunity offered for either; but, nevertheless, Mr. Williamson continued in daily attendance upon her, and her favourite studies went on without interruption.

The dining-room—in atonement, perhaps, for her garret—was resigned to her use from

the hour of breakfast to that of dinner ; and, moreover, Mrs. Brixbourg very earnestly assured her (when Anastasia was not within hearing), that the drawing-rooms also were entirely at her disposal, and that she hoped she would always receive her morning visitors there.

But it was a long time before Clara had any morning visitors ; and when, by very slow degrees, she shyly permitted herself to like and be liked by one or two individuals who happened to suit her, the dining-room, notwithstanding its comfortless aspect, was preferred.

Had Clara been a poor girl, she would, had her manners under such circumstances remained the same, have been called extremely shy ; but being a rich one, she was pretty generally considered to be very proud.

But in truth she was neither the one nor the other.

Her manner was reserved to all who did not happen to strike her as being what she called, and what she felt to be, *loveable* ; but this reserve was the natural result of the very retired

life she had led during the long illness of her father, and had nothing to do either with shyness or with pride.

On the contrary, she so dearly loved conversation, when it deserved the name, that she oftener got into deep discussion with any one who understood, and happened to suit her, than is at all usual with a young lady so little used to society as herself.

But although unused to society, she was used to Mr. Williamson. It was he who had taught her to love discussion, and to sustain her part in it too, with less proneness to diffusiveness and to the drawing illogical conclusions, than is generally attributed to females.

But the conversational powers of Clara, be they what they might, were not often brought into action, except when, as heretofore, she and her schoolmaster, as she still delighted to call him, found themselves *tête-à-tête*, or with nobody but aunt Sarah to listen to them.

It happened, however, that before she had been quite a year in her new residence, she made an acquaintance with an individual who

really appeared to her to be as capable of conversing rationally as even Mr. Williamson himself; and what rendered this discovery the more extraordinary, was its having been made in a ball-room.

The person thus gifted by nature, and favoured by the heiress, was a well—nay, a nobly-born young gentleman, who had just left his tuft at Oxford, and left with it the reputation of having taken a high degree with apparently very little trouble. The name, or rather the names of this fortunate youth were Henry Octavius Hamilton—the second having been given in commemoration of his being the eighth son of his father, the Earl of Springwood.

Unfortunately the revenue of Lord Springwood was by no means in proportion to the number of his offspring, for he was blessed with two fair daughters in addition to his eight stalwart sons; and at the time Clara became acquainted with the said Henry, he was making one of his father's large family in Cavendish Square, without any very decided notion as to which way he was to turn, or be

turned, in the hope of finding wherewithal to live, without continuing to be a burden upon this very worthy but much embarrassed father.

Henry Hamilton was a good deal struck, as it is called, with Clara Holmwood ; and Clara Holmwood was a good deal struck with Henry Hamilton on the first evening that they were introduced to each other.

Henry did not feel quite sure that Clara's face and form were the most perfect he had ever seen ; but he did not feel any doubt whatever as to the fact that, for some reason or other which he could not perhaps have very easily explained, it was more worth while to take the trouble of getting a steady, uninterrupted look at her than at any one else.

Clara, on her part, had she been questioned as to what she thought of him, would probably have replied that she hardly knew whether to call him handsome or not, but that there was something about him a good deal out of the common way ; and that she therefore hoped she should see him again, for she was getting dreadfully tired of all the people.

This wish would have been likely enough to be gratified, as far as evening parties went ;

for the beauty of both "Mrs. Brixbourg's young ladies," and the well-known wealth of one of them, procured them abundance of invitations; and the Honourable Henry, notwithstanding his unfortunate addition of Octavius, seemed known and welcomed almost as much as if he had only one brother, instead of seven.

But it may be doubtful whether the acquaintance between him and my heroine would ever have flourished as it now seemed likely to do, had not Lord Wellby, the eldest brother of Henry, been introduced as a partner to Miss Brixbourg on the same evening that Clara first danced with the cadet.

The fair Anastasia, indeed, did not scruple to aver that she thought the honourable Henry Hamilton "beautifully handsome," and that his being the son of an earl was quite reason enough for him to be invited to every evening party they gave; but as to *her* ever giving a serious thought to a mere honourable, *that*, she declared, was what she would never, *never* do, if she remained single to the day of her death!

But the case was very different as to Lord

Wellby. She knew, indeed, that he never would be a rich nobleman, but that was no objection; on the contrary, she thought it gave her a better chance; and accordingly both the young men soon found themselves quite on an intimate footing at "Old Brix-hourg's;" and to say the truth, they both seemed very well inclined to cultivate this intimacy; for Anastasia was by no means a dull girl, and her beauty had certainly never appeared to greater advantage than in her flirtations with Lord Wellby, when her propensity to insolence was checked by her admiration for his title, and her violent temper veiled by the most radiant smiles.

As to his much younger brother, the fascinations which beset him were of a very different character, and it is less easy to explain his feelings.

Had Lord Wellby been asked why he called so often in Portman Square; and why he so constantly accepted every invitation he received from the spruce old doctor and his vulgar wife; he would have replied with equal ease and sincerity, that it was because "That Anastasia girl was so devilish handsome."

But if Henry had been questioned in the same manner, he would not have answered so readily. In the first place, he would have felt much more embarrassment from being questioned; and in the next, he would really and truly have been much less able to give an intelligible answer.

However, as nobody did question him about it, there was no difficulty whatever in letting things go on as they were; for it was all very easy, and very agreeable.

Though Lord Springwood was a poor earl, he was a long-descended nobleman; and one consequence of this was, that he had a good library, a considerable portion of which covered the walls of a large handsome room which stretched itself far into the court-yard of his house in Cavendish Square; and from this library many an old-world volume found its way to the dining-room of Dr. Brixbourg.

Now it almost invariably happens, that when a young gentleman begins lending books to a young lady, something more or less approaching to a flirtation between them is the consequence; and the case I am now de-

scribing was no exception to this; for, at least, many of the signs and symptoms which are supposed to indicate flirtation, would have been visible to any one in any degree more sharp-sighted than aunt Sarah.

For instance, Henry Hamilton always looked flushed when he entered the said dining-room, and deposited his volume, or volumes, upon the table; and Clara, on her side, could never have been thought too pale, just at the moment when she was returning thanks for the offering. Moreover, it is a positive fact, that neither the young gentleman nor the young lady could have guessed the time of day, within an hour or so, if asked to do it, during the time these frequent visits lasted.

And yet these interviews were never *tête-à-tête*. Aunt Sarah was always present, and schoolmaster Williamson very often.

It was pretty nearly impossible, however, that all this could go on long without producing the usual catastrophe; in short, the young gentleman and the young lady fell in love; and though they seemed rather cautiously to avoid saying anything to each other

on the subject, it is certain that the thoughts of both were a good deal occupied by it.

The natural result of this was, that they each became rather anxious to obtain all the information they could about the other; but the effect of the information mutually obtained, was unfortunately anything but sympathetic; for while everything that Clara heard respecting Henry Hamilton led her to think, that if he really liked her, as well as he seemed to do, her happiness for life was in a fair way of being secured with as little delay as might be after the completion of her twenty-first year. On the other hand, all and everything that poor Henry could learn respecting Clara Holmwood, tended to convince him that it was quite impossible that, as a man of honour, he could ever think of making her his wife.

Her feelings, poor girl, and the bright hopes they led her to form, were so straightforward and natural, that no explanation could make them better understood by the reader, than the brief statement which has been already given. But the case was different with respect to Henry; and the best way of

explaining his feelings on the subject will be, by giving a letter or two which he addressed to the only very intimate friend he had in the world, a young man whom he had left at Oxford, in the high-road to a fellowship, and to all the dignity of becoming a college tutor.

In one of these epistles he said—"You reproach me justly, my dear Clarkson; I am no longer the more faithful correspondent of the two, but am become as idle and as purposeless as a bit of straw, floating before a summer breeze. I believe, too, that I have lost my judgment, as well as my activity, for I cannot make up my mind to feel certain whether I am right or wrong, in taking up my pen as I have now done, for the purpose of explaining to you, as well as I can, the course of the change which has come over me.

"It is likely enough that I am wrong, because I am conscious that the motive which leads me to do it, is selfish; for assuredly it is not for the purpose of amusing you, my dear, kind friend, that I feel so strongly disposed to discuss the character of the strange girl who

has contrived of late to make me forget everything but herself.

“ I suppose I am in love, Clarkson ; but if I am, the symptoms of the malady differ very essentially in my case, from what I have always understood to be the infallible³ indications of it in others. This girl Clara, (never mind her other name, it matters not,) this girl Clara is very decidedly beautiful, although I dare say there may be many who would think her less pre-eminently lovely than I do ; but if I do not greatly mistake my own feelings, Clarkson, it is not her beauty, much as I admire it, which has captivated me ; neither can I with a safe conscience say that it is the beauty of her character which has done it, though I love that too, after a fashion ; but I am perfectly aware that she is haughty, and self-willed in no small degree.

“ But there is a something in the tone and quality of her mind, that it is totally beyond my power to describe, but which has altogether a charm for me, that I am quite unable to resist ; but it is as strangely out of the common way, as is the sentiment to which it has given birth.

"There must be great folly in my telling you all this, for what can it avail me? And yet, somehow or other, I feel pleasure in doing it.

"Can you forgive me for this selfish weakness?

"I am afraid it must be hopeless for me to ask you what I had best do, to release myself from this state of thralldom; but should you chance to know of any recipe, any process, and discipline, that you think might help me, instruct me how to use it."

"On my honour, Clarkson, I am in earnest; I would welcome gladly and gratefully, any counsel that was likely to set me free from this strange fascination."

The rest of this epistle had nothing to do with our story, being chiefly concerning the occupations and prospects of the person to whom it was addressed.

An answer to it arrived by return of post, and from this I shall extract only one sentence.

"In asking for a prescription, Hamilton, you should have been more explicit as to the circumstances in which you are placed. You

have stated your symptoms clearly enough, but have left me in the dark as to the facilities or difficulties which may lie in your way, either to assist or impede your profiting by any advice I might give you. Does the lady appear to like you? In plain English, does she appear to share your feelings?"

Henry wrote in reply—"To the best of my knowledge and belief, the lady does not dislike me; but in English as plain as your own, I must add that on one rather important point I believe our opinions differ. I *know* that I cannot marry her, and I greatly fear that she is not aware of this.

"And now you know ALL; and I now ask you, with a very sincere intention of listening to your opinion, whether you think that an intercourse which has hitherto been entirely intellectual, may not be continued without injuring her happiness, while assuredly it would very greatly contribute to mine?"

"I know I can trust myself as to the never deceiving her for a moment; and on the contrary, I cannot help thinking that if she may have hitherto misunderstood me, the continu-

ance of our present intimate and most delightful meetings, with the continued careful avoidance on my part of everything that might suggest the idea of my intending to propose to her, will be more likely to set the matter right than any other mode of conduct I could pursue.

In reply to this, his friend wrote as follows :

“ Your last letter has given me pain, my dear Hamilton. I am your senior by a few years, but I have never till now suspected that you were too young to be a fitting friend to so sober-minded an individual as myself.

“ Perhaps you will say that I forget you are no longer an under-graduate, and remember only that I am a tutor ; but even with this wish before me, I must tell you, my dear fellow, that I think you are arranging a very dangerous, not to say somewhat iniquitous scheme for your amusement.

“ Do not start at this strong language, and throw my letter indignantly aside, but read on quietly, and then contradict me if you can.

“ You tell me in your postscript that your father is still continuing his efforts to get you

attached to some embassy of sufficient dignity to be worthy of your noble blood, but that there seems very little chance of his speedily succeeding. Which means, being interpreted, that there is every probability of your remaining in London without an occupation. Now the amusement you propose for yourself in order to beguile the tediousness of this weary sort of waiting, is the cultivating an intimacy with a beautiful and highly intellectual girl whom you are determined never to marry, though you confess that you love her, and that you think she does not dislike you; adding, moreover, that you fear she is not aware of the impossibility of your ever marrying her.

“If I have mis-stated the case, tell me so; if not, reflect upon your project a little more, before you act upon it.”

The reply of Henry Hamilton to this remonstrance was as follows:

“MY DEAR CLARKSON,

“You have not mis-stated the case, but you have misunderstood the nature of it; and

you must now submit to what may appear a very long rigmarole, by way of explanation. Your first blunder is the supposing, as you evidently do, that my long, frequent, and always delightful conversations with the young lady in question, have been enjoyed in a lover-like style; and if not literally *tête-à-tête*, sufficiently apart to be very sufficiently confidential. It may make some difference in your view of the case, if I describe to you the style and manner of our interviews.

“ They take place in the dining-parlour of the house where she is living, and which is allotted to her use between the hours of breakfast and dinner, in order to enable her to continue her educational studies, which are still very assiduously going on, under the superintendence of an old clergyman, who is her instructor, and has been so for many years. This highly-informed, and, in all respects, most estimable old gentleman, is almost always present during our frequent interviews. But, although I have sometimes called before, and sometimes after the time allotted to his daily visit, I have never upon any occasion

found the young lady alone ; her aunt, to whom she appears very fondly attached, being constantly her companion. *Au reste*, I have often danced with her, and it is then only, that I have ever had the opportunity of saying to her anything which I wished that no other should hear ; but I can truly say, that I never used these opportunities to talk to her of love.

“ The iniquitous scheme for my own amusement of which you accuse me, goes no farther. I have never intended that it should ; nay, I have very resolutely determined that it should not.

“ But I am not going to end my statement here. In the hope of recovering your esteem, my dear Clarkson, I must tax your patience, while I explain to you the reason why I thus ‘ let I dare not wait upon I would.’

“ I doubt if you exactly know what my position is, though I have never sought to disguise it ; but in the many hours which we have passed together, we have never been at a loss for more interesting themes of conversation than could have been furnished by any domestic details of mine.

“ You know, however, as well as I do, that my father is an English earl ; but probably do not know as well as I do, that he is very particularly poor in revenue ; though very particularly noble both from long and from unblemished descent. You know also, if I mistake not, that I am one of a family of ten children, and an eighth son.

“ My eldest brother, who wants but two years of the ripe age of forty, has the happiness of being one of the most thoughtless, as well as the most good-humoured men in existence ; and with his small, and, I fear, often ill-paid allowance of three hundred a year, is, I really believe, as happy and gay-hearted a being as ever existed. My second, third, and fourth brothers are in the army, and are abroad with their respective regiments ; the fifth is lucky enough to be a paid *attaché* to an embassy ; the sixth is, as you know, a clergyman, and the fortunate incumbent of the family living ; and the seventh is a lieutenant in the navy.

“ After giving you this catalogue, it is scarcely necessary for me to add, that my own prospects in life are not brilliant.

“ At one time I was, as you may remember, very desirous of studying for the bar ; but my father very frankly told me that he really could not afford to let me enter upon a career which was very doubtful as to its final success, but quite certain as to its immediate expenses ; and now the only prospect I have before me is to await the result of my father’s interest, which he is exerting very strenuously, to obtain some diplomatic appointment for me.

“ Meanwhile, I have been beguiling my leisure, pleasantly enough, as younger sons can easily do here, if they do not present themselves in the questionable shape of lovers. Moreover, my father has a very good library here, as well as at High Grove, and I have not yet left off my habit of reading.

“ Now, then, you know as much about me, and my actual position in life, as I know myself. At the beginning of the present London season, my eldest brother, Lord Wellby, offered to take me with him to a ball, given by some new acquaintance of his in Portman Square. When I asked him the name of the

host, or hostess, to whom I was to be presented, he laughed, and told me not to give myself airs ; but after a little of his usual gay bantering, he told me that the lady who gave the ball, was the wife of the well-known physician, Dr. Brixbourg, whose daughter was decidedly the most beautiful girl in London.

“ I went to the ball, and saw there not only one very beautiful girl, but two ; one being the daughter of the doctor, and the other his ward. I was introduced to both, and danced with both.

“ The daughter is certainly handsome, and had I not known that Wellby was a notorious flirt, I should have suspected from his marked devotion to her that he was desperately enamoured. The *ward*, both in appearance and manner, was as unlike this brilliant young lady as it is well possible for one beautiful girl to be unlike another, being tall, slight, and pale, with eyes and hair more like the colouring of Spain, than that of England ; while Miss Brixbourg is less tall, less slender, with blue eyes sparkling athwart a maze of almost flaxen ringlets.

“The room was a very handsome room, and the company in appearance very much like other gay ball-room company. There were several young men whom I had met before, and a few ladies also. This all seems very common-place sort of trash as I write it, but yet it is the only preface I can give you to my romance.

“As to my describing any of the fascinating peculiarities in the manner and conversation of Miss Holmwood, (such is the name of Dr. Brixbourg’s ward,) I shall not attempt it, for I feel that if all I could say of her, were to be said to me of another, I should be strongly tempted to laugh at the description as the product of an enamoured fancy.

“All that it is necessary for me to tell you, in order to make you comprehend my position, is, that I found, or fancied, in her a character and an intellect greatly unlike, and greatly superior to anything which I believed existed among women. I do not, however, mean to deny or conceal the fact, that her personal beauty also appeared to me more picturesque, and more attractive, than any I had hitherto seen.

“In the course of this first evening’s very *unballroom-like* conversation, a book was mentioned from which she had seen extracts, and expressed a wish to read. I knew it was in my father’s library, and I asked if she would give me leave to bring it to her. The offer was very frankly accepted, and on the following morning I presented myself, and my name being given to the servant, he ushered me into what was evidently the dining-room of the mansion, and where, in fact, the company had taken refreshments on the preceding evening.

“But it was now very differently occupied.

“Seated at a large round table in the middle of the room, was my lovely partner of the night before: a writing-desk was open before her, and many volumes were scattered on the table. A grey-headed clergyman of three-score or upwards was seated beside her, whom she immediately presented to me as her dear friend and master, Mr. Williamson. This old gentleman, it seems, has been her tutor and sole instructor for many years, she having herself resolutely made choice of him in preference

to a governess against whose manner, or appearance, she had conceived some strong prejudice ; and the young lady, being both a motherless and an only child, was permitted to have her own way.

“I doubt, however, if any better choice of an instructor could have been made ; for though she is not yet twenty-one, she has read more, and has much more general information than it is, I believe, usual to meet with, either in males or females, at that age. Near one of the windows was seated a very neat and gentle-looking old lady, to whom I was introduced as “*Aunt Sarah*,” and to whom this beautiful girl seems very affectionately devoted.

“The acquaintance thus unceremoniously began, has been going on now, for several months, and has been rendered more easy on my part by the whim (for I am sure it is nothing else) which brings Wellby here either morning or evening, and sometimes both, every day of his life.

“As I am the only one of his numerous brotherhood within reach, his sociable, good-natured spirit leads him to make much of me,

and he rarely goes anywhere without trying to make me accompany him.

"When his way leads to Portman Square, he certainly finds no difficulty in obtaining his object.

"I do not wish to make my strange story longer than necessary, my dear Clarkson, and I think I have already said enough to make you understand that, notwithstanding my peniless condition, at the present moment, I was likely to be growing anxious to learn all I could respecting the family and position of Miss Holmwood.

"I flattered myself that I should find her to be a person born in the middle ranks of life, and possessed of some little independent fortune. Had this been the case, I had determined upon being immediately ordained, thinking that my father might be able to assist me with his interest, among his numerous acquaintance, in obtaining a curacy, if not a living. But the information I received respecting Miss Holmwood was fatal to all my hopes.

"I would now wish to teach myself to love her as a sister ; but I can never marry her !

This lovely and most highly intellectual creature, Clarkson, is the daughter of a corn-factor in Mark Lane. This, to a noble and (heaven help us!) a very proud family, would be a pretty strong objection; but I confess that, were it the only one, it would not be sufficient to deter me from asking her to be my wife, if she would wait till I was in a position to obtain our daily bread.

“But the other objection is *insuperable*. I do not even wish to get over it; and, in truth, I would not if I could. This corn-factor’s daughter comes of age in a few months, and she will then be in the uncontrolled possession of an enormous fortune.

“Were she poor, I would hazard my life to obtain her; and were I of her own rank in life, I would do the same. But it shall never be said that the penniless son of the Earl of Springwood sold himself to a corn-factor’s daughter for hard cash!

“I have little, or rather I have no doubt, my dear friend, that you are right in contemning my project of platonic attachment; and the best proof of the sincerity with which I make

this avowal is, that I am determined to give up all my lingering hopes from the church, and to persuade my father to let me try what I can do to help myself in the new world that is opening before us in Australia. If my poor father gets rid of me for a hundred a-year, he will have no reason to complain; and I shall be quite ready to accept this in full of all my demands upon him. Hitherto, as you well know, I have cost him very much more, though I have never been accused of extravagance. And now, then, farewell! Tell me that you do not think me *iniquitous*, and I shall be well repaid for thus opening my heart to you, though the task has been in some respects a painful one."

CHAPTER VII.

THE statement thus given by Henry Hamilton was a very honest one, and yet it was mistaken in one very essential point. He had deceived himself in supposing that he had given Clara no intimation of the feelings she had inspired.

It is quite true, indeed, that he had never talked to her of love ; but she neither was nor could be insensible to the devotion with which he seemed to listen to every word she uttered.

Though there was very little of intimate or familiar intercourse between the Brixbourg family and their inmates, the hours which of necessity they daily passed together at table, gave too tempting an opportunity to the vain

Anastasia for boasting of her noble conquest to be lost by her ; and as both her father and mother were pretty nearly as much delighted by Lord Wellby's marked attentions as the young lady herself, they were often discussed in a tone of gay *persiflage* by them, to the very evident delight of their blooming daughter.

But occupied as this young lady certainly was by the admiration of the titled elder brother, her very sensitive vanity was nevertheless considerably wounded by the neglect and apparent utter unconsciousness of her beauty betrayed by the younger one. Of course she never alluded to this in her strictures upon him, but evidently found considerable satisfaction in dwelling upon his unfortunate position in being the eighth son of a poor noble family.

“ If his father, instead of being an earl, was only a tradesman (and here her bright eye glanced slightly towards Clara), it would be much better for him ; for then he might be put into trade himself, you know, and taught to get his bread. But that's impossible now ; and he must be sent abroad somewhere or



other, to keep him out of the way. I'm sure I hope he won't be kept in England to be a burthen to Wellby; for he is too disagreeable, and altogether too stupid to be borne!"

Miss Anastasia's speeches were very apt to sleep in the ears of Clara; but the harangue I have quoted above was an exception. The words were both heard and remembered; and the undeniably painful position of Henry Hamilton became a subject of very serious meditation to her. On the whole, however, the result of this meditation was far from painful; for it led her literally for the first time to dwell with pleasure upon the idea of her own colossal fortune.

During her father's lifetime she had never thought about it at all, for the subject had never been brought before her; and since his death all allusion to it had come blended with the idea, that if she had not possessed this great fortune her little-loved guardian would never have taken the trouble of cajoling her father into appointing him to the office; so that the thoughts she had hitherto bestowed upon her wealth were not

of a nature to make her rejoice very cordially at possessing it, and her wisdom would not stand very high in the judgment of any rational reader, were it to be stated how large a portion of it she would have been willing to resign, upon her becoming a member of Dr. Brixbourg's family, could she by so doing have insured the certainty of never seeing any individual belonging to it again.

But she had now learned to form a very different opinion on the subject, and secretly breathed many a joyous thanksgiving for the magnificent independence which would enable her to atone to the man she loved, and who she felt so very sure loved her, for the misfortune of suffering from poverty, which his noble birth only tended to render more painful.

It is a difficult task for a young and ardent man, while enjoying an easy and frequent intercourse with a woman, with whom he is passionately in love, to conceal from her the real state of his heart; and Henry Hamilton was greatly mistaken when he fancied that Clara was quite unconscious of his attachment to her. She was, indeed, not only perfectly

aware of it, but she was, moreover, perfectly contented to hide this dear conviction silently in her heart, till she was at full liberty to receive the amount of his love in a manner that would be dictated wholly by her own will and pleasure, without the odious necessity of asking for her "guardian's" consent to her marriage.

She had little, or rather she had no doubt that Henry was silent on the subject, precisely for the same reason; and this absence of all painful doubt and uncertainty on the subject, gave an easy, light-hearted cheerfulness to her manner, which certainly went far towards persuading him that the iniquity which had been laid to his charge had not produced any very mischievous effect.

Had he thought otherwise, had he seen any reason to believe that the delightful hours they thus continued to pass together, were endangering the peace of the woman who had unconsciously made such wild work with his own, his conduct would have been very different. But it certainly was no wonder that he failed to detect any great sympathy of feeling, where not only all the demonstrations, but the

causes which produced them, were so completely the reverse of all which influenced himself; for while the future suggested nothing to him which could save him from hopeless despondency, her happy heart was swelling in her bosom as she meditated on the power she possessed of atoning to him for all the untoward circumstances of his position.

Month after month wore away without any apparent change in their position, excepting that Clara seemed to grow more brightly beautiful, as day by day the longed-for termination of her minority drew nearer; while poor Henry, save when he was under the immediate influence of her presence, became more and more wretched.

He had met with no opposition from his father when he had stated to him his Australian scheme, for the noble earl began greatly to fear that he had exhausted all the influence he had, and that his youngest son had little or no chance of ever belonging to the diplomatic corps, even as an *unpaid* attaché.

The venerable nobleman had, of course, heard a good deal of the prodigious quantities

of gold which everybody seemed sure to find, if they did but look for it in the right place ; and he had heard too much of Harry's success at college, to feel the slightest fear of his being so stupid as to look in a wrong one ; so the hundred-a-year was not only promised, but the manner of its payment and remission very satisfactorily arranged, and the business of his equipment was set about in as judicious a manner as could reasonably be expected under existing circumstances ; his thoughtful sister, Lady Jane, coaxing the old housekeeper to let her have the little venerable family medicine chest, which she packed with her own pretty hands ; while Lady Louisa immediately set about knitting him a purse of rather large dimensions, after charging him, as she proceeded with her work, to write her word when it was quite full of sovereigns.

But of all this Clara knew nothing.

Henry continued to read with her, discuss with her, and look at her ; but he uttered no word respecting the future.

At length a sort of painful doubt shot like an ice-bolt through the heart of Clara, upon

seeing the unfortunate young man turn deadly pale when her approaching birthday was alluded to by Mr. Williamson.

She had herself been making some laughing reference to the state of despair into which she had been plunged, by the appointment of the obnoxious guardian from whose authority she was now so nearly released ; and her tutor reminded her of her aunt's timely remark, that the arrangement she so greatly disliked, "would not last *very long*."

"Nevertheless, I have sometimes thought, that the days of durance lingered dismally," replied Clara.

"So dearly do I love independence," she added, turning with a radiant smile and a rosy blush towards Henry, "that I should have been tempted to make very foolish bargains, at almost any moment of the tedious score of months during which my non-age has lasted, if I could have reduced months to weeks by doing so. I would very gladly have given a hundred pounds a day for the reduction."

And then it was, that instead of receiving anything like a *reflect* of her blush, and her

smile, she saw Henry Hamilton turn extremely pale, and looking much more like a contemned criminal, than a hopeful lover.

His aspect in an instant drove everything like joyousness from her spirit, and she felt so much more inclined to cry than to laugh, that, conscious of the change, and desperately afraid that she might betray it, she sprang from her chair, and ran out of the room.

Of the trio that remained, aunt Sarah was the only one who did not in some degree understand the cause of her sudden exit.

Her loving tutor had long ago penetrated the mystery of the two young hearts, which had been for many months, with little caution, exposed to his view. He was quite aware that Henry Hamilton and Clara Holmwood were in love with each other; and as the one had good birth, and the other great wealth, a marriage between them seemed to him not only certain, but very suitable.

He, therefore, interpreted the sudden flight of his pupil as a symptom of maiden shyness, which shrinks from everything, and every word, which seems to threaten an approach to

the theme upon which its own thoughts are occupied.

Henry Hamilton too, fancied, or feared, something a little approaching the truth ; but they neither of them guessed that one short glance of the young man's eye had sufficed to convert her hope into fear, and her joyous gaiety into sadness.

But Clara had received into her very heart and soul the conviction that Henry loved her, and was only waiting for her emancipation from the thralldom of wardship to tell her so. No wonder, then, that the sudden expression of unmistakeably painful emotion which took possession of his features, upon hearing her gay allusion to her approaching freedom, had come upon her with all the effect of a sudden and very terrible disappointment ; and so violently did her heart throb under its influence, that instead of fulfilling her boast, and flying up the stairs like a lapwing, she had to pause more than once before she reached the longed-for shelter of her distant room, and could throw herself upon the bed to indulge in a hearty fit of weeping.

Her disappointment was, indeed, most deeply lamentable, and the strong language used by Henry's right-minded friend, Mr. Clarkson, was fully justified by the misery his thoughtless conduct had produced.

But the character and temperament of Clara were too healthfully elastic to permit her easily giving way to despair, and after the first passionate burst of grief had passed away, she began to feel that it was impossible she could have been altogether wrong and mistaken, in believing that Henry Hamilton liked her ; and having sufficiently recovered herself as to be thus far reasonable, she set herself to the task of considering all the causes, probable and improbable, that might account for his looking so very miserable, when the near approach of her twenty-first birthday was alluded to.

Clara had never been in the habit, either before her father's death, or after it, of meditating very profoundly on the somewhat rare position in which she was placed by the large amount of her fortune, and the early age at which she was to be put into the uncontrolled

possession of it ; but the rather frequent allusions made by Miss Anastasia to the pitiable poverty of younger brothers in general, and of Henry Hamilton in particular, had of late made her think with considerable complacency of her own splendid fortune, and of the perfectly uncontrolled independence, and freedom of action, with which it would in a few short weeks be placed in her hands.

Hitherto, however, while meditating upon this pleasant theme, it had never occurred to her that if Henry really loved her, as she believed he did, any difficulty could arise, after she was twenty-one, to prevent her bestowing herself and her fortune upon him in return. But now, while meditating upon all the possible and impossible causes which might be assigned to account for his looking sad, when he ought to have nothing but joy at his heart, it occurred to her that it was *possible* he might feel less perfectly sure of her love than she did of his.

Could he have seen the blush and the smile which followed this suggestion, he might have been tempted to press her to his heart, and forget all his scruples for ever.

As it was, however, the more Clara meditated on the subject, the more she became convinced that as he must be equally well aware of his own poverty as of her wealth, he would be likely to shrink from making a proposal, which it was *possible* might be rejected.

What then was to be done? Was the happiness of both to be sacrificed to an idle punctilio or a groundless fear?

The predicament in which she stood was certainly a very singular as well as a very painful one.

Clara's notions respecting the perfect independence of action which she was to enjoy on attaining her majority, were certainly somewhat beyond what sober, common sense might have dictated; and the embarrassing accident of her being a woman, and (worse still) a young one, had never yet occurred to her as impediments to her doing whatever she liked, provided that she liked nothing that was really wicked and wrong.

Nevertheless, not even this broad margin could enable her so completely to conquer the innate feeling which teaches every woman that

she must "be wooed, and not unsought be won," as to enable her to persuade herself that she ought to take the initiative, and make an offer of her hand and fortune to Henry Hamilton.

Her maid came to assist her in dressing for dinner, before she had arrived at any conclusion as to what her conduct ought to be under these very puzzling circumstances; and she could not but feel, poor, pretty, youthful female as she was, that the very perfect independence—upon the possession of which she placed more value than on all her wealth—greatly increased her embarrassments at the present moment.

That her dearly-beloved aunt Sarah was a species of nonentity of no earthly use, excepting to be loved and petted, she knew full well; although she would never have made up her mind to make this plain statement, even to herself, as simply and truly as it is here set down. But without assigning to herself the precise reason *why* aunt Sarah could not be useful to her on the present important occasion, she only felt that she would not plague

her by telling her what she was suffering, for any consideration whatever.

And in this state of mind she sat down, and submitted her long, dark silken tresses to the gentle, though perhaps not very skilful, hands of Susan.

Perhaps Clara was conscious, though she had certainly never meditated on the subject very earnestly, but it was one that she was conscious that her hair did very well with the assistance of no more skill than was required to smooth it with a brush, and secure it with a comb. At any rate, it is certain that on the present occasion she had scarcely patience to submit even to this, before she exclaimed—
“There, dear Susan! that will do beautifully! Now just fasten my frock, and then wait here for one moment, while I write a note to my dear old schoolmaster. And this you must give to Joseph, and tell him to take it instantly to Tottenham Court Road. Tell him that he is to wait for an answer, Susan; and that if they say anything about his standing behind my chair at dinner, he is to pay no attention to it, but do as I order him, without giving any explanation about it.”

It was while beholding her own beautiful face in the looking-glass, while Susan was brushing her glossy tresses behind her, that the idea of asking her old friend and tutor to assist her came into her head.

Perhaps she thought, as she looked at herself, that she was not so unsightly as to render a young man indifferent to her person, when he had so distinctly shown a liking for her conversation, by the very eagerness with which he had sought her society. And if this were so, how desperately foolish would they both prove themselves to be, did they permit themselves to be kept asunder by the lucky accident which made her so rich as to render his poverty of no consequence whatever !

The more she had meditated on the subject, the more firmly she had become convinced that it was this vast inequality in their fortunes which kept him silent.

“ He loves me !—I know he loves me ! ” was the thought which unceasingly recurred to her ; and as unceasingly was it followed by the conviction that he shrunk from the possibility of its being supposed that he sought her hand, in order to obtain her wealth.

“And shall we be parted for ever for such a paltry punctilio as this?” thought Clara, colouring with indignation at the idea that beings so deeply—nay, so *sublimely* independent in their feelings as she believed him, and knew herself to be, should be the sacrifice of such contemptible imbecility of purpose.

“It is my dear old friend and tutor who shall save us from this folly and this suffering,” was the decision to which she at length came.

Her note was accordingly written and sent; and Mr. Williamson accordingly came, as he was requested to do, exactly at nine o’clock, by which time the dining-room had, by her directions, been made to resume its morning dress and appearance.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature in the intercourse between Clara and her tutor was her habit of freely confiding, or rather of fearlessly avowing to him all her speculations and opinions, however crude and unauthorized by authority.

The advantages of this system were many, but not wholly unmixed with danger. The habit of thinking was doubtless encouraged

by the pleasure attendant upon this free and unchecked expression of her thoughts ; but it led to bolder speculations than could be quite safely entered upon by one about to be so entirely and so dangerously independent in position as the rich young heiress.

Mr. Williamson, who was almost as ignorant of life—or at least of young-lady life—as even Clara herself, listened to all her theories, sometimes with pleasure, sometimes with admiration, sometimes with amusement, but always with attention, and never with alarm.

It never occurred to him that this sort of intellectual skirmishing, though pleasant, and even useful as an exercise, might lead a girl of twenty-one, who had unhappily no human being who possessed either the power or the right of controlling her, into sundry kinds of danger.

During the conversation which now took place between them, the good, learned, but very simple-hearted old man, began, for the first time, to suspect that his dear pupil's habits of independent thinking *might* lead to a greater degree of independent action

than might be convenient in so young a woman.

Her long-established habit of confiding all her likes and dislikes, all her feelings and all her wishes, to her old friend, rendered her confiding her present embarrassments to him a matter of much less difficulty than it would have been in most cases. It is unnecessary to lengthen my narrative by repeating every word that passed between the tutor and pupil upon this occasion ; it will be enough to state that she made him as fully understand the peculiarity of her position as she did herself.

The reader is aware that her doing this did not give the good man any very distinct idea of the actual state of affairs. She did not scruple to state her conviction, that Henry Hamilton loved her ; neither did she shrink from avowing that she returned his affection, and placed all her hopes of happiness in life upon the idea of becoming his wife.

So far, there was certainly no difficulty in making herself understood ; for the tutor was neither so old nor so blind, as not to have

perceived that these two young people were very decidedly enamoured of each other, and it was not upon this occasion that his mind for the first time conceived the idea that a marriage between them was probable.

But when Clara proceeded to say that there were difficulties in the way of this marriage which *he only* could remove, his view of the affair became greatly less distinct. He perceived, indeed, from her statement, that she believed her wealth, as contrasted with his poverty, was the cause of his never having declared his attachment to her; and good Mr. Williamson thought it was very likely to be the case, and felt, moreover, that such a scruple was extremely natural; but, nevertheless, the old gentleman could not help thinking that such an obstacle was scarcely solid enough to keep two loving hearts asunder, when every other circumstance rendered their union so perfectly easy; and he told her so.

"True! quite true! my paragon of confessors," replied Clara. "But, nevertheless, a helping hand is necessary, and that helping hand must be yours."

“ Mine ?” returned the venerable confidant ;
“ as how, my dear child ?”

“ Truly and simply by making him understand that In short, dearest and best of schoolmasters, you must make him comprehend that his being the eighth son of a poor man, is no reason, in your opinion (or in mine), that he should not marry the only daughter of a rich one.”

“ It will be better, I think, my dear child, that he should find this out for himself,” replied the good man, looking a little embarrassed.

And Clara looked a little embarrassed too ; for she saw, and felt, that he was so very right, as to make it a matter of extreme difficulty to convince him he was wrong.

She could not quite tell him, poor girl ! how very, *very* plain, had been the language spoken by her lover’s eyes, and how very completely it said all that she wished to hear ; she could only repeat, that truly it would be a lamentable thing if two people, who were not only devotedly attached to each other, but who possessed between them wherewithal to live

like princes in the land ; she could only repeat that it would be VERY sad, if two such people were kept asunder, because one was too delicate to ask, and the other too proud to offer marriage ; where the wealth was all on one side, though love was equally abounding in both.

Poor Clara ! This observation was a very just one ; the only mistake was, that she placed those troublesome articles—delicacy and pride—in the wrong places.

But though Mr. Williamson felt very strongly, that the case, as she put it, was indeed a very sad one, he still felt a strong repugnance to the task assigned him, which he could not but perceive was nothing less, if stated in plain English, than offering the hand of his wealthy, young, and most confiding pupil to a young man who, let him love her as well as he might, certainly did not love her well enough to disregard all obstacles sufficiently to offer himself to her.

He said this, though not in quite such plain language, to his pupil ; and then, perhaps for the first time in her life, her energy and

courage totally gave way, and she burst into tears.

Where were the words to be found, or where the arguments, which could have touched the heart, and overpowered the judgment of the old man as effectually as those unwonted tears ?

“ Clara ! my dear, dear child ! ” he exclaimed, “ your happiness is dearer to me than my own ! If I *can* set this matter right, trust me I will do so. With all your love for this young man, and with all my high opinion of him also, we can neither of us wish that your delicacy, my dear child, should be compromised, in order to spare his ; but, short of this, Clara, there is nothing which I am not ready to do, or to say, in order to ensure your happiness.”

The fervour with which the good man spoke, as well as the words themselves, caused her cheeks to glow, and her beautiful eyes to beam with hope athwart her tears.

“ I trust to you implicitly, my more than father ! ” she replied ; “ and if you fail to unravel this web . . . why, in that case, you

know, I must resolutely determine to break through its meshes, and recover my freedom !”

And so they parted ; the old man stoutly, and righteously, determined to do all that ought to be done, to fulfil her wishes ; and Clara herself climbing to her bed-room, quite determined not to leave it again till she was in a condition to appear before all who might chance to be in the drawing-room, without giving any of them reason to suspect that she was not the very happiest heiress in the world.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEVER was an embassy undertaken with a more earnest desire on the part of the ambassador to bring it to a happy conclusion, than was now felt by Clara's grey-haired schoolmaster, as he set forth to do her bidding.

He was, however, more conscious, perhaps, than ambassadors usually are, of his own unfitness for the office ; and this consciousness, though it in no way abated his zeal, might probably in some degree lessen the courage with which he set about performing his task.

It had been decided between these strangely-mated confederates, that when Henry Hamilton made his almost daily call in the middle of the morning, he should find Mr. Williamson in the dining-room alone.

But the middle of the morning, and its end also, came for three successive days without bringing Henry Hamilton with it; and wounded to the heart, yet still firmly persuaded that nothing kept him from her but the enormous inequality of their fortunes, she at length contrived to persuade the devoted old man to call upon him and ask him for a certain book, which she had declared herself very anxious to read, but which the young man had neglected to bring.

And nothing could be more easy, she thought, than that Mr. Williamson, when reminding him of his forgotten promise, to bring it, should ask him, half in jest, and half in earnest, why he had absented himself so long from the literary discussions of Dr. Brixbourg's dining-room?

"The answer he shall give to this question," said Clara, as she explained the commission to her faithful agent, "will probably decide both his fate and mine."

The worthy schoolmaster bowed his head, but said nothing in reply. Clara coloured, and looked at him rather reproachfully.

“Is it possible,” she said, “that you know me so little as to misunderstand the motives and the feelings which lead me to act thus? Do you think I would do so if I did not know he loved me? Do you think I would do so if I did not know that his poverty is such as to render his asking me to bestow my hundreds and thousands upon him, an act which might appear in your eyes, as in those of the whole world, as almost disgraceful? Only let me hear you say after this interview, that you do *not* think he loves me, and you shall see, my dear old friend, that, though I may blush for my blunder, I shall know how to sustain myself under the disappointment.”

As the old man looked at the solemn earnestness of her beautiful countenance as she said this, he seemed to feel that he had no right to control the conduct of one whose every thought was as pure and as noble as he well knew hers to be; and he left her again with the reiterated assurance that all which his little skill in such matters might enable him to achieve towards placing things in a right point of view before the (doubtless)

greatly embarrassed young man, should most faithfully be done.

It would not be easy for any old gentleman to give a greater proof of devotion to a young lady than Mr. Williamson did when he set off on this expedition to the mansion of Lord Springwood, for the purpose of enlightening his young son upon the readiness with which the wealthiest heiress in London was disposed to bestow herself and her thousands upon him.

But the very excess of his embarrassment seemed to act rather as a spur than an impediment ; for his resolution to perform the task he had undertaken, gave him that sort of desperate courage which has often achieved success, in enterprizes which a calmer and more reasonable state of mind might have shrunk from attempting.

He found the young man alone in the not much frequented parlour behind the dining-room which served as a library to Lord Springwood's London house ; and if anything could have refreshed his spirits under the weight which rested on his greatly troubled mind, it would have been the cordial manner in which he was received.

“Welcome, my dear Mr. Williamson!” exclaimed Henry, springing forward to meet him. “It would not be easy for me to name the man from whom I should deem a visit so great an honour. . . . And have you really taken this long walk for the purpose of chatting with me a little? Or have you some stronger reason, such as borrowing an unsunned review? . . . But don’t confess it. Let me enjoy the idea that your visit is to me.”

“And you may receive it as very perfect truth, my dear sir,” replied the old gentleman, looking kindly at him. “The free access you have allowed me to your books has been very pleasant, and often very useful to me; but I may, with perfect sincerity, assure you, Mr. Hamilton, that I have enjoyed quite as much pleasure from your conversation as from your books. The difference of age between us has not prevented my appreciating and valuing, your character, and I come to you now, because the time is rapidly approaching when I may not be likely to see you at all; and I would not let this time arrive without thanking you for the kindness you have shown me, and for the

many pleasant hours I have enjoyed from your never appearing to remember that I was an obscure old man, and that you were a distinguished and nobly-born young one."

Something of a painful expression passed over the countenance of Henry Hamilton, as he listened to these words; but it was immediately chased by a very friendly smile, as he replied, " You and I have not hitherto wasted the pleasant hours we have passed together in making fine speeches ; but if it were in my nature to do so, Mr. Williamson, I could say a good deal as to the pleasure, and the instruction also, which your society has afforded me. But I grieve to hear your doubts respecting the probability of my immediately losing you. My projected expedition, though it will, beyond all doubt, effectually remove me beyond reach of all my friends, cannot take place before the spring ; and I had hoped that, during the interval, I should still have the pleasure of frequently seeing you."

" I am afraid not, Mr. Hamilton," returned the old man, after a short pause, during which he shook his head, and fixed his eyes with an

air of melancholy speculation on the carpet ; “I am afraid that I am doomed to lose sight of you, before the Spring, for I expect to leave London very shortly. In coming here to-day, indeed, I came with the painful conviction that this would probably prove our last meeting.”

“Why do you go, my good friend?” demanded the young man, somewhat abruptly. “Your absence will be lamented by others, besides myself,” he added, while a sudden flush mounted to his cheeks and brow ; “unless, indeed,” and then he paused, but presently finished the sentence by adding, “unless, indeed, you should be going to take possession of some pleasant country parsonage, and in that case your friends must rejoice at your absence, instead of lamenting it.”

“No !” replied the good man, shaking his head, “I have no such pleasant reason to assign for my departure ; but, nevertheless, Mr. Hamilton, I think I might find it more easy to account for it rationally, than you could do, if closely questioned concerning your reasons for flying off, as you are going to do, to the other side of the globe. I should set

out upon my own journey with much more satisfaction, if I could hear you say before I did so, that you had abandoned your very romantic and, as it seems to me, your very ill-advised project."

Young Hamilton remained silent for a minute or two; and then said, but in a tone which showed no indication of being offended by the frankness of this appeal, "I have so repeatedly found both pleasure and profit by listening to your comments upon many of my thoughts and speculations, that if you will have as much patience in listening to my theories and reasonings, concerning my insignificant self, as you have bestowed upon me when I have dared to soar and to dip into heights and depths, wherein I had less right to venture, I will tell you without reserve my reasons for deciding upon the *romantic* line of conduct which you so evidently appear inclined to condemn. Could I have chosen my own destiny, my dear friend, I would not have been a very supernumerary incumbrance on so very noble and so very poor a family as that of my good father; but such being my actual

fate, my first duty (I think) is to render myself as little burdensome to this very kind father as possible. I know, much more fully than it would be easy for me to explain, how thoroughly and completely Lord Springwood has exhausted all his interest, personal, collateral, and hereditary, in providing for my elder brothers; and I truly believe that his kind heart is often wrung as he looks at me, and remembers that he knows not in what direction to turn himself, in order to secure to me the means of maintaining existence without compromising the honour and dignity of the noble race from which he is descended. I have watched this, my good friend, till I have positively forgotten my own share in the misfortune, in my true sorrow for his. You cannot be surprised, therefore, that my meditations should have been dedicated with a good deal of earnest fixedness to this most difficult problem. Such, I do assure you, has been the case, and in such a degree as often to cast a sadly darkening shadow upon hours that I greatly fear will prove, nevertheless, to have been the happiest of my life. But be

this as it may, I have had the courage requisite to decide me upon adopting what I believe to be, however disagreeable, the best chance within my reach, for relieving my poor father, and providing the means of existence for myself. In short, as I believe you already know, I am determined upon migrating to Australia."

"I have heard so," replied Mr. Williamson, in an accent too sadly grave to leave any doubt as to *his* judgment upon the wisdom of the scheme.

"It is much easier for me to comprehend your opinion of my project, than for me to make you comprehend the vast variety of very excellent reasons which have induced me to adopt it," replied Henry. "They may, however, be all comprised in one pithy sentence: it is, in my judgment, the *best* which my very unfortunate circumstances have left within my reach."

Mr. Williamson bent his head in reply; but for a minute or two both the gentlemen remained silent, and both seemed to feel that the theme was a painful one.

Mr. Williamson then rose, and taking his hat from the table on which it was deposited, he said, while his mild, earnest eye was fixed on the face of his companion, "Of course, my good young friend, you have not decided upon taking this very important, and somewhat desperate step, without having taken into consideration all the misery which it may occasion to others, as well as all the difficulties in which it may involve yourself."

The instantaneous effect of these words upon Henry Hamilton was such, that poor Mr. Williamson most heartily lamented having uttered them. The young man for a moment became deadly pale, but in the next his face was in a glow, which it was painful to contemplate, so very plainly did it indicate both embarrassment and pain.

"Forgive me!" exclaimed the greatly distressed nuncio; "forgive me, Mr. Hamilton! I have no right to probe your feelings thus; and nothing but a very ardent wish for your happiness can excuse it. But the quickness with which you have comprehended my allusion, convinces me that I have already

said enough to bring your thoughts to one feature in your position which most assuredly ought not to be overlooked."

"Nor has it been overlooked," replied Henry, in a voice which positively trembled from emotion. "I would it had been possible to overlook it! But of this be assured, that no degree of pain which my self-banishment may inflict on others, can equal, or even approach, the misery which it inflicts on myself."

These words, uttered in a tone which vouched both for their sincerity, and for the pain which their utterance caused to their unhappy speaker, roused a degree of hope, and courage too, in the heart of the old man, far greater than he had before experienced.

"Such an avowal of your feelings, my dear young friend," he exclaimed, fixing his hopeful eyes affectionately on the strongly-agitated countenance of his companion, "must justify, and more than justify, my opening your eyes to a fact of which you by no means seem as yet to be fully aware. I conceive that the

words you have now spoken to me express, and were intended to express, the state of your feelings when contemplating a final separation from my dear pupil. I have not—I cannot have mistaken you. Mr. Hamilton, you love Clara; and I now feel myself called upon to reveal the important fact, that my dear pupil returns your love. Her fortune is something gigantic. So immense,” added the good man, with a happy smile, “that I will not venture, in my poverty-stricken ignorance, to talk of the amount; but such as it is, and such as you know *her* to be, are within your reach, if, indeed, you love her, as I firmly believe you do. Such an avowal, coming from one so trusted by her as I have been, would have something worse than indiscretion—something almost like treachery in it, were it not for the very peculiar circumstances in which you are both placed. You are—for you *must* be already—aware that she regards you with partiality; nevertheless, although you love her, you will not tell her so, because she is rich and you are poor. Have I not read the riddle right, Mr. Hamilton?”

It was, indeed, scarcely possible that Mr. Williamson could doubt that he had done so; nor was it possible that Henry in his secret soul could accuse him of having blundered in believing that he loved Clara. Nevertheless, the old man was very nearly as far from understanding his feelings aright, as if he had come to the conclusion that she was an object of perfect indifference to him.

There was no chance, however, that this delusion should last long; for whatever mixture of contending feeling might have been struggling in young Hamilton's heart, there was none in the resolute impulse by which he meant to rule his conduct. Had the fortune of the unfortunate Clara been of a less notoriously colossal amount, the case would have been very different, for she was quite lovely enough—as he knew only too well—to have rendered many, very many, exceedingly apt to feel that her fortune was not likely to be the strongest attraction; while on the other hand, if the rank of Lord Springwood had not been in such painful contrast with the positive poverty of his younger children, the motive for

his avowing himself the lover of Clara could not have been so painfully doubtful.

But poor Henry Octavius had been in the habit of hearing his light-hearted eldest brother—who was decidedly well received by all the pretty women with whom it was his will and pleasure to flirt—sometimes reproached, but oftener, perhaps, commended, for the independence of spirit which had prevented his ever taking advantage of this, for the sake of improving the family rent-roll.

There was not one of the numerous race who more cordially joined in approving this independent spirit than Henry himself; and so genuine and so strong was this feeling, that it certainly kept his admiration of the wealthy Clara within very prudent bounds, at least for a time; and perhaps it did so, almost unconsciously to himself.

But when at length the unhappy young man discovered that in truth he loved her, notwithstanding his very particular reasons for wishing to avoid it, his resolution was immediately taken, and with a firmness that had, perhaps, more of pride than common sense in it.

Had he been less occupied by what he fancied was keeping a very strict watch over his own feelings, but which, in fact, only amounted to his resolutely avoiding any fresh expression of them—had he been less assiduously devoted to this *perfectly vain* attempt, he might have had a better chance of perceiving that his own peace was not all that was endangered by the odd sort of morning visiting, of which Dr. Brixbourg's dining parlour had been the scene.

But, as it was, he was too much occupied in keeping watch and ward over himself, to dream that the peace of poor Clara was in danger; nor was it till within a few days previous to the scene above described, that any serious idea of this crowning misery had suggested itself.

When it did, however, its only effect was to make him contemplate his own conduct with so vehement a degree of self-condemnation, that he began to look forward to his Australian project as a positive relief.

Never for a moment did the idea suggest itself to his mind that he might do more

wrong in flying his country, with a pretty tolerable certainty of being utterly wretched, than by remaining in it with a pretty tolerable certainty of being supremely blessed.

The terrible idea, that by appearing to sell himself for the hoarded wealth of a London tradesman, he should bring endless disgrace not only on himself but on all his numerous race—a race which had so little, save its unscathed honour, to sustain it—haunted him like an evil spirit. And he bowed and sank before it!

Nothing could be a stronger proof of the powerful influence of this feeling than the manner in which it overwhelmed and mastered every other. Had the idea that it was possible Clara loved him, been unaccompanied by the consciousness that he loved her, his judgment might have been less at fault as to which way honour called him; but a sort of *chivalresque* dread of yielding to temptation so utterly perverted his judgment, that he instantly decided upon acting very like a villain, in order to avoid the imputation of sacrificing his honour for the sake of happiness.

The species of courage, however, which this firmness of purpose gave him, did not dispose him to meet the expressive countenance of the old man, whose eye, as he well knew, was earnestly fixed upon him.

Had Henry doubted Clara's love—had any idea that she might, for any reason, have been led to refuse him, the case might have been different; but as it was, his eyes were very resolutely fixed upon the floor, as he replied—“ You have *not* read aright, Mr. Williamson, the nature of the position in which I am situated. I am bound in honour to forget myself; and I have resolutely determined that I will do so. Let me not deceive you, however, by leaving you to suppose that my self-banishment has been decided on, from a generous fear of leading a wealthy heiress into the imprudence of marrying a man who has nothing. This is not the feeling which induces me to sacrifice all hope of happiness by losing sight of Miss Holmwood for ever. My real motive is one which it is probable that she, and you likewise, my good friend, may consider as a less imperative one than it appears

to me ; but, nevertheless, it is one to which I should feel myself bound to sacrifice my life itself, as well as my happiness, if I were called upon to do it. The poverty of our family, Mr. Williamson, has never yet led any of us to commit an act which could be thought to compromise its honour ; and I would greatly prefer a very early death to being the first who should prove an exception to this."

" Your approaching departure, Mr. Hamilton, is fully enough to prove your want of sympathy with the wishes I have been rash enough to express," replied the old man ; " and there is no sort of occasion," he added, " that you should give yourself the trouble of detailing your reasons for it. They are, in truth, quite sufficiently evident. You are too proud to marry the daughter of a corn-factor, even though you love her. I pity you, young gentleman ; and you must excuse me, if I confess that, in this feeling there is some mixture of contempt. Had you studied human nature more, and the peerage less, it is possible you might have come to a different conclusion."

" You forget our poverty, sir ! Did you

remember this, you could not so mistake me!"

But the door was already closed upon Clara's unhappy envoy, and he heard not a word of the attempted reply ; and when Henry Hamilton raised his eyes from the floor, on which he had resolutely kept them fixed, he found himself alone.

CHAPTER IX.

IN the course of the night, which followed this interview, the unfortunate Octavius wrote the following letter to his college friend, Clarkson :—

“I doubt if I shall find much comfort in writing to you, my dear Clarkson ; I cannot say, indeed, I hope to do so ; and still less, perhaps, do I hope to derive any comfort from your answer ; nevertheless, I am in no way disposed to break my promise, of communicating to you the end-all of my most unfortunate acquaintance with Miss Holmwood. That you will blame me, I know ; and that I have done wrong in suffering the intercourse between us to continue so long, I am willing to admit. Nevertheless, my judgment acquits me of having been guilty of any wrong deserving a

worse epithet than imprudence. Not only am I guiltless of having idly sought to please her, while conscious that I had no intention of offering her my noble pauper hand, but I fully believed that I possessed the strongest evidence possible that she would have been greatly more surprised than pleased by such an offer.

“I have been so thoroughly well initiated in the ways of pretty young ladies, when giving the sort of encouragement necessary to produce an offer of marriage (for I have, from boyhood, been the confidant of all my eldest brother’s flirtations), that I felt as sure as the sun gives light and heat, that Clara Holmwood gave no such encouragement to me. .

“It is true that my heart, more than once, seemed to warn me that I was making wild work with my own happiness, and that the parting from her, *for ever*, might cause me a pang worse than any which my poverty had ever yet inflicted. But I very speedily convinced myself, by what appeared to me most excellent and unanswerable reasonings, that there would be little wisdom for a man in my position to sacrifice a positive present pleasure

because he knew he should not be able to enjoy it long.

“All this delusion, however, has vanished, and I am sufficiently humbled, by my conscious blundering, to confess that I am very miserable. Let this satisfy you, Clarkson. . . . I believe I intended, when I began my letter, to give you a very full, true, and particular account of everything that has happened to me. But what would be the use of it? I have not energy enough to make the attempt. Let it suffice that I tell you that I am not only miserable myself, but have at last arrived at the consciousness that I am not miserable alone.

“It is strange, that you should have understood what was passing between Miss H. and myself, better than I did, with all my fancied watchfulness! But so it is. While becoming, for my misery, attached to her, I have led her, most unintentionally, to become attached to me. I can no longer doubt the fact, for it has been made known to me in a manner which leaves no chance of my being mistaken. I have but one thought to cheer me under the

heavy load of sorrow which I carry with me to my distant banishment, and to that I cling with the faith of a martyr. I have never for a single moment lost sight of the honourable principle which has guided my actions throughout the whole of this most unhappy affair I have never for a moment permitted myself to waver between the high duty which I owed to my family, and the unspeakable happiness which I might have secured to myself.

“ My family may weep over my grave, Clarkson ; but they shall never blush for any act of mine, which, while securing my own happiness, might tarnish the unsullied honour of their name. I witnessed the struggle in my poor father’s mind, when an opening was offered in a well-established banking-house to poor Frederic ; and the heart-felt satisfaction which he expressed, the following year, upon his obtaining an appointment for him as an *attaché*. Nor was his satisfaction solitary—there was not *one* of the family who did not share it with him ! Yes, dear Clarkson, I have done my duty ; but the task has been a hard one, and I feel as if the performance of

it had exhausted all the energy I possess. Do not, therefore, expect to hear from me again very speedily. The writing about my miserable self would be a painful effort to me, and my letters would assuredly afford no pleasure to you. So farewell, my dear friend! Your name is too honourably known at Oxford to be speedily forgotten there, so I shall never be at a loss where to look for you, should I ever feel disposed to believe that a letter from me would be worth the postage it would cost you. And as to your writing to me in return, where shall I tell you to address your letters? To the Honourable Henry Octavius Hamilton, or the earl? Should that fail, some sapient postman, you know, may add—‘try—’ under it.—Farewell!”

There was no exaggeration whatever in this statement of miserable feeling; but if poor Clara had described her sufferings with equal sincerity, she would have produced a more melancholy picture still. For Henry Hamilton, in the midst of all his solitary sadness, had the consolation of believing that he had

done what was right; whereas, the unhappy Clara felt with more truth, and with equal sincerity, that what she had done was wrong.

It must, however, have been a hard heart which could have failed to pity her, as her eye shrank from meeting that of her too devoted, too obedient messenger; when he stood pale and heart-struck before her, literally wanting courage to announce the failure of the lamentable embassy which she had forced him to undertake, in defiance of all his clearly-expressed disapproval of it.

Poor Clara! It might have been some comfort to her, could she have known how very dearly her old schoolmaster loved her still, and how very readily he would again have obeyed her, even had her commands been more painful still, could he, by doing so, have lessened in the very least degree the mental agony so fearfully legible on her pale features.

But, alas! there was no such comfort for either of them. He could neither avoid giving, nor could she avoid receiving, a plain statement of the unmistakable fact, that Henry

Hamilton was about to banish himself to the gold diggings of Australia, rather than run the risk of being persecuted into the acceptance of a somewhat less doubtful treasure of English gold, if it was to be obtained by the condition of accepting *her* into the bargain!

This terrible truth had to be uttered, and listened to.

No equivocation, no softening, was possible. Had Mr. Williamson been so ill-advised as to attempt this, he would soon have felt that poor Clara's misery could only have been increased thereby; for were he to represent the purpose of Henry as less resolutely fixed than he had declared it to be, a renewal of the lamentable embassy might appear possible; and from this her already repentant schoolmaster was determined to save her.

With desperate courage, therefore, he honestly performed the dreadful task of telling her that he had not left the young man without giving him to understand that his departure would give pain to one whose happiness might, from his own conduct, have been supposed to be of importance to him.

"You said this to him?" said the unhappy Clara, the deadly paleness of her countenance being suddenly converted to crimson.

"Yes, my child, I did," replied the old man firmly. "Had I shrunk from doing so, I should have left my promise unperformed."

"Most true," returned the unfortunate girl. "Most true! But I was surely mad when I forced you to make such a promise. Some malady is upon me, my dear schoolmaster! Join your prayers to mine, that it may soon prove fatal!"

"No, my Clara," replied Mr. Williamson, gently. "No! The whole affair is greatly to be lamented, for both your sakes; for I am very sure that the young man is quite as miserable as you can be. He loves you, my sweet Clara. I am not one to conceive such an idea, lightly. Henry Hamilton loves you, Clara. But he thinks that he should do wrong if he married you."

"Wrong to marry me?" she replied, with a perplexed expression of countenance. "Pray explain yourself! I do not understand what you mean. . . . Why should it be

wrong for him to marry me? Is there anything peculiar in my temper? Or has there ever been anything in my conduct which can justify his thinking so?"

"No, Clara, no," replied the old man firmly, "and he probably knows this almost as well as I do, my dear child; but, nevertheless, you may trust the truth of my statement. Henry Hamilton thinks that he should do *wrong* if he were to marry you."

"And do you agree with him?" said Clara; her misery and self-condemnation appearing for the moment to be overpowered, and forgotten in her astonishment.

"I almost wish I could answer you in the affirmative," replied Mr. Williamson; "for in that case I should at least escape the self-reproach which now weighs upon me; as I remember how completely ignorant I have left you of many things of which, however unimportant they appeared to me, you ought not to have been left in ignorance."

"I am afraid, dear Clara," he continued, "that I have never taught you to recognise the existence of that strange passion called *family pride*."

"Not so, I assure you," replied Clara, eagerly. "Pray do not torment yourself by so idle a fancy. You forget how very desultory my reading has been. I am perfectly aware of the existence of such a feeling, although I have never been under its influence. But I did not know, I believe, that it was classed as a passion."

"But sit quietly down by me," she added, after the interval of a moment's silence. "Let us both recover from the over-vehement emotion into which we have suffered ourselves to be betrayed! I am better, my dear old friend! I am much better than I was a few minutes ago, and I think it is likely that I shall be better still, presently."

And, while thus speaking, she resumed her usual place upon the sofa, and looking at him with a sweet and loving smile, she pointed to the vacant place beside her.

"Now then, my schoolmaster!" she said, "delay no longer giving me all the instruction you can upon this mysterious subject. If I understood you rightly, you meant to tell me that it was Henry Hamilton's family pride

which drives him to Australia, in order to avoid all risk of being tempted to marry me."

There was something almost startling in the sudden change in Clara's voice and manner, as she said this; Mr. Williamson took her hand and looked earnestly at her for a moment, without replying.

"Nay! Do not look at me," she said, "as if I frightened you, because you have shed a gleam of light upon my benighted soul. . . . Ah! dear friend! and of the most precious light that God has given us! . . . The light of the glorious sun he has allotted to us, is very precious, but the light of TRUTH is ten thousand times more so! Would I could make you understand the good you have done me! Had you told me something respecting Henry, which, while it cured my love, would have taught me to despise him, the benefit conferred on me would have been of a very doubtful nature, for my contempt for myself would have gone hand in hand with my contempt for him. . . . And no blessing can reach us in the shape of self-contempt. . . . But the case is far different now. . . .

I have loved this young man ; and most assuredly I believe I love him still. I believe, also, that he loves me. Your judgment and opinion, on this point, are exceedingly satisfactory to me, but I think I should have had faith in his love, even if you had doubted it. This being so, the only feeling that can succeed to that which it must be my effort to conquer, will be *esteem*. Henry Hamilton, doubtless, believes himself to be doing his duty ; and there would, therefore, be a much more lamentable inequality between us, than is produced by my inferiority in birth, did I contemplate his conduct with anger, instead of admiration. May God be with him ! For me, I have now the great consolation of knowing that the difference in feelings and opinions between us is too great to have permitted our being happy together, as man and wife. The attraction which drew me so powerfully towards him, arose from the belief that our opinions, our tastes, and our sentiments, were in more than common accordance. And on many points, I still think they are so. But, happily for us both, he has shown himself aware of the im-

portant fact that this sympathy is not complete: And his high principles have led him to choose the rougher path which lay before him, rather than one more smooth, but less in accordance with what he believes to be right. Can I resent this as an injury? No! On the contrary, I feel nothing but gratitude to him for the honourable courage which led him at once to make me understand him."

The old schoolmaster had certainly, for many years, been in the habit of contemplating his pupil both with love and admiration; but at that moment he felt more of both than he had ever been conscious of before.

"What would the unfortunate young man feel, if he could see and hear thee at this moment, my Clara?" he exclaimed. "How far would his pedigree go towards atoning to him for what he has lost?"

"Not far enough," she replied, while a faint blush mantled her delicate cheek, "not far enough, perhaps, to make him quite happy; and for that, among the rest, let us

hope that he may never see me more. But be this as it may, he has given irrefragable proof that what his principles teach him to think right, his will has energy to perform. But, however widely we may be separated by our differences of opinion and position, there is one duty which we are equally called upon to perform. We are both equally bound to avoid, with all possible care, the chance of our meeting again. I will make aunt Sarah's room my abode by day, during the week which remains of my '*not very long*' minority; and when this is over, and all our money accounts settled, you, dear schoolmaster, must accompany aunt Sarah and me on a little expedition into your favourite Gloucestershire. I have been long wishing to see your boasted Malvern Hills, and my first free flight shall be in that direction."

There was so much quiet sincerity of purpose in Clara's tone of saying this, that Mr. Williamson was puzzled to comprehend by what means she had contrived to relieve herself, and him, from the load of misery which had weighed so heavily upon them both, some few short moments before.

But so it was.

He felt as if he could not fully understand her ; and yet he felt too, very distinctly, that she was not deluding him. His only fear at that moment respecting her was, that she might be deluding herself.

But this fear did not torment him long ; for whatever is uttered with sincerity, rarely fails of carrying conviction with it ; and, most assuredly, there was no shadow of fallacy in the feelings thus expressed by Clara. She believed, in the most solemn depths of her heart and soul, that Henry Hamilton had acted in strict conformity to what he conceived to be his duty ; and this persuasion would have sufficed to shield him from any feeling of anger on her part, had the result to herself been as fatal to her life as to her happiness.

Had she set herself to examine the nature of the obstacle which thus divided them, by the light of her own unsophisticated good sense, she would have been likely enough to have classed what he believed to be high-toned principle, under the head of very egre-

gious folly; but her truly righteous spirit judged his conduct according to *his* opinions, and not according to *her own*. It might be well for the world, did all of us pass judgment on our fellow-creatures upon the same principle; as it was, it was well for my Clara that she did so, for it left her disappointed heart without a shadow of anger in it; and though she loved Henry still, she no longer felt any wish to become his wife; and if he carried one-half of her heart to the antipodes, she very resolutely determined to live the wiser with the other half.

* * * *

As to the judgment passed on the unfortunate Henry by his Oxford friend, it was by no means so lenient.

Clarkson was disappointed; but he was angry too. "This young man has deluded me," would have been his phrase, had he given words to the feeling with which he folded up the unfortunate Henry's farewell letter. "I am glad he has declined receiving an answer to it. He is not what I thought him!"

CHAPTER X.

It can rarely happen that a heart of such kindly warmth as that of aunt Sarah, should remain as tranquil as hers did, while that of the being she best loved on earth was undergoing such vehement agitation, almost within reach of its pulsations being heard.

But there are other distances than those produced by locality ; and notwithstanding all their true love for each other, there was a wide world between the hearts of the aunt and niece, where Henry Hamilton was concerned.

Soon after their acquaintance had commenced, and considerably before the idea of an attachment between them had occurred to any one else, aunt Sarah had made up her

mind to believe with very considerable certainty that this nice-looking young gentleman would fall in love with her niece, because he could hardly help doing so, seeing her, as he did, almost every day ; and she thought, too, that it was very likely he would make her an offer of marriage, on account of his being the son of "a lord," which would give him a right to do it, without any impropriety, notwithstanding her great fortune.

But this idea very speedily wore itself out for want of material to feed on ; and by the time that Clara had pretty nearly forgotten that there was any other young man in the world, her aunt had ceased to remember that he was one, and would as soon have thought of Mr. Williamson's declaring himself a lover, as the learned young gentleman who brought them such quantities of books.

All this was a great comfort to Clara, and spared her a vast deal of embarrassment and suffering. But, if it is rare for a disappointed young lady to escape the sympathy of her most devoted female friend, it is at least equally so that she should possess so very per-

fect a degree of it as existed in the heart of her old schoolmaster.

Fortunately for her, she was aware of both these important facts, and she was pretty nearly equally thankful for each ; but it was a silent thankfulness—she said nothing to either of them.

It will be easily believed, moreover, that Clara was in no danger of again encountering her very truly unfortunate, and very truly miserable lover ; and a few moments' quiet thought upon the subject so completely sufficed to convince her of this, that the extreme measure of taking refuge in aunt Sarah's bed-room was abandoned, and Clara's last days in the mansion of her guardian preserved very accurately the form she had given to the first.

The most strictly-regulated forms of politeness on her part, and a most cautious adherence to a sort of worshipful deference on the part of her hosts, had ever and always prevented any thing approaching to a jar between them ; while the self-willed vehemence of the fair Anastasia had been marvellously kept in order

by the daily-increasing earnestness of her hope that the golden days of Clara's minority would not come to their conclusion before she had attained the object for the sake of which she had consented to endure them.

And thus, to the very last, all that was visible on either side went smoothly.

Moreover, as the trustees selected by the careful corn-factor for the guardians of her property were as well chosen as her personal protector was the reverse, her pecuniary affairs were all settled, and made intelligible to her, in the most satisfactory manner possible; and when they resigned their office, she had the great pleasure and advantage of retaining them both as *friends*.

The first ex-official favour which Clara asked and obtained from these useful friends, was their very important assistance in laying out a few of the many thousands remaining in their hands, from the surplus of her two years' minority, in the purchase of a living for her paternal friend, Mr. Williamson.

It did not seem as if Clara were doomed to be in all things unlucky; for having stated

to her friendly agents, that the said living must positively be found in the old gentleman's dearly-beloved native county of Gloucestershire ; that its annual value must not be less than five hundred pounds ; and, moreover, that there must be a good house upon it : they not only purchased, on no very unreasonable terms, the next presentation of a living combining all these advantages ; but she had, moreover, to thank the gods for the very speedy demise of the venerable incumbent upon it, which took place with wonderfully well-timed vicinity to the completion of the transaction.

It was no sudden thought which led her to decide upon making this purchase of a good living for her old schoolmaster ; for she had long before determined that he should be independent, as soon as possible, after she became so herself ; but it would, probably, never have entered her head to insist upon the excellence of the dwelling-house, had not an event of very painful interest to the old man occurred during the last weeks of her minority.

The only near relations Mr. Williamson had in the world were a widowed sister and her daughter. A widow's pension from the government formed very nearly the whole of this sister's income; her husband, who had been a captain in the army, having been killed in an Indian skirmish. On this income the mother and daughter lived, very contentedly, at a cheap little village in Wales; and Clara might never have contemplated the possibility of her old friend, seeking any other home than her own, if this state of things had continued; but this endowed sister died; and though his worthy niece immediately found a temporary home in the house of a friendly neighbour, it was not such a one as could be lasting; and Clara became aware that the taking care of her rich self, was no longer her dear schoomaster's first duty.

It would have been difficult, under the circumstances, to have found any occupation so likely to do our heiress good, as the having to assist her dear old friend in preparing a comfortable home for himself and his desolate niece.

Had Clara been brought up at a fashionable seminary, instead of her own queer school-room, this occupation would not have been half so useful to her ; for in that case, she would have learnt that mischievous secret of excessive refinement which robs us of the energy which is the best elixir of life ; and by teaching how to get everything done for us, leaves us pretty nearly incapable of doing anything for ourselves.

Had Clara been taught to do everything by deputy, the essential relief which her busy activity in preparing a home for her school-master now brought her, would have been limited to the writing a few liberal orders to a few not greatly-interested tradespeople. But as it was, she, and her aunt too, were as busy as the busiest of bees, when in the construction of a hive ; and, as a heroine, she would have lost all claim to the sentimental interest of my readers, could they know how very few minutes during the twenty-four hours which then passed over her, were bestowed in meditations upon her aristocratic lover.

Luckily for Clara, the business she had

undertaken was not, according to her manner of doing it, to be got through very rapidly ; and, perhaps, she was herself a little surprised, when her busy task was done, to feel how far she was from being miserable.

The watching this unaffected cheerfulness, gave a brighter gleam of satisfaction to the heart of the new incumbent than either the comfort of his house, or the fertility of his glebe ; and yet he was insensible to neither. The watching the altered looks of his lately-desolate niece was another source of very cheering comfort to him ; and while he blessed his generous pupil, and lovingly watched all her little thoughtful contrivances for embellishing the home, and the existence of this so lately almost hopeless girl, his own heart taught him to understand that the work going on was indeed twice blessed.

But these loving labours came to an end at last ; and then Clara gaily announced her intention of setting out "to see the world."

"And what new bit of it do you mean to begin with, my Clara?" said her old school-master, something like a look of anxiety blending with the smile that answered hers.

"It matters not very greatly, does it?" she replied. "I mean before I set out to give our niece Mary the key of a strong box, which I have had constructed for the purpose of holding a pretty considerable amount of postage money; for you are altogether deceived, my dear rector, if you fancy that your having taken the duties of a parish upon you, is to exonerate you from the task of superintending everything I say and do. No one knows better than you do, that this is no sinecure; but I have a strong persuasion, and of some years' standing too, that you are a conscientious man, and that you will not let me do anything very wrong without crying, 'Holt la!' by the voice of the postman."

"And will you promise to stop short in your sayings and doings, my Clara, whenever this 'Holt la!' reaches you?" said the old man.

"I will do as well as I can in that line," returned Clara, laughing. "If I promised more, my words would give you no comfort; for you know that I am by nature somewhat rebellious. I will promise to have

no secrets from you ; and I promise also to do what you bid me, excepting when I can give you very strong reasons for doing something else. Moreover, I hereby engage to set down, in fairly legible black and white, all my goings, doings, and readings, until such time as the 'Holt la!' shall come from you. Will this satisfy you, my dear, suspicious mentor?"

"I suppose it must," replied the old man, with a sigh.

"Nay ! It need not," said Clara, gaily, "if you and Mary will but now and then take courage, and set off with a guide-book and a map *en poche* to find me out, and pay me a visit ; you may, perhaps, find something to see worth looking at, and something to say too, worth my listening to. Will you promise this?"

"Let us promise nothing, my Clara," he replied, "save to go on loving one another. As long as this lasts, we shall neither of us have reason to complain."

"And this will last from the mere force of habit," said she, rising, and pressing her lips upon his forehead.

He fondly returned the caress ; and said, cheerfully—"Manage your movements and your occupations, my beloved child, as shall seem best to you. I very truly believe that you will want no one to help you. Aunt Sarah will look like your protector, and you will, in spirit and in truth, be hers as well as your own ; so that, in honest truth, I should affect a degree of anxiety which I do not feel, were I to say that I have any alarms about your safety. All I dread is, the not seeing you."

"And as to that, I must trust to your consciousness of the feelings being reciprocal," returned Clara.

"As a matter of precaution," she added, playfully, "I shall always take care to let you know exactly where I am, that you may always be able to set off in person to tie me up, if my communications give you reason to suspect that I am going to do something very desperate."

No discussions concerning the future took place between them, before the departure of Clara, of a graver tone. They were both

pretty nearly equally ignorant of the world and its ways. Had they known more, they might, perhaps, have acted less wisely; for the old man might have trembled and faltered at the anticipation of danger which was quite as little likely to reach Clara as if she had been a nun; and the young girl might, in like manner, have been daunted by visions of mischief, against which she carried about with her a shield, a vast deal more effective than could have been placed before her by the most accomplished and experienced chaperon that ever lived.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE was not, on the part of Clara, any mixture whatever of delusion in the cheerfulness with which she set out upon the expedition she had planned. She anticipated occupation, information, and amusement; and reasonably enough thought, that if herself and her loving aunt continued in good health, they might find the means of being very well contented with the future.

That this state of mind was in her case reasonable, can scarcely be denied; but it by no means follows, that every young girl as abruptly disappointed in the hopes of an apparently well-placed attachment, as she had been, could, or should, be expected to bear it so well.

There is probably no very reasonable hope of mending the matter ; but as society is now constituted, the happiness of English women seems to depend too much upon the *accident* of being married, or not married.

It is neither personal attraction, nor mental attraction, nor the still more important temptation offered by a sweet and gentle nature, which decides the question ; neither is it at all sure of being more advantageously arranged for the benefit of the weaker sex by the aid of money. It is rarely that a bought husband turns out worth having.

In short, this all-important affair is (in England) much more the result of accident, than of any cause that can be calculated, and reasoned upon.

But assuredly the difference is very great between the disappointment of a poor young lady, and a rich one, upon this matter.

Clara had loved...had loved in vain...had loved unhappily. But with all her noble qualities of heart and head, she would have felt her misfortune very differently, had it doomed her to an existence which depended upon her-

self, while the means which this solitary self could command were so greatly more limited than she had probably been taught to hope for.

Of this advantage she was sufficiently aware to make her feel that she ought not to class herself among the most unfortunate of her sex, nor did she do so; on the contrary, she contemplated her unknown future with feelings *very rarely* as hopeful as she expressed.

But how was she to shape this future?

This was a question which she had often asked herself without as yet having hit upon any very satisfactory answer. She lamented, in some of her reverses, that her education had not been more *special*. "Had I been persuaded into believing that I possessed a talent for painting, or for sculpture, or for music, or for astronomy, I might have amused my life, by fancying that I was making progress towards something desirable; but never having been conscious of possessing any talent at all, my existence must, of necessity, be a very shapeless one."

There was too much of truth in this, for the idea to be easily combated; and these re-

verses left her in a state of rather uncomfortable uncertainty as to the mode of her future life.

Clara's temperament, however, was not calculated for the nourishment of despair. She was conscious of an elastic spring within her which, if one scheme of existence failed, would give her energy to try another; and to this she very fearlessly trusted, to prevent her getting weary of herself.

The first resource which suggested itself was travelling.

"Yes! she would travel far and wide, and make acquaintance with her fellow-creatures in all directions."

Thanks to the varied and persevering labours of her schoolmaster, aided by great natural facility in the acquirement of languages, Clara was no bad linguist. She read Latin, French, Italian, German, and Spanish, with great facility, and felt well-founded confidence in her power of speaking them also; at least, all such as were left alive, without the necessity of submitting herself for the purpose to any very laborious process.

But beyond this, she was quite conscious that her education had taught her little or nothing that would assist her in putting her roving plans into profitable execution.

She was, in fact, pretty nearly as ignorant of all knowledge or experience appertaining to the details of travelling, as aunt Sarah herself could be; her only superiority consisting in her being aware of the deficiency, and of the absolute necessity of supplying it, by some means or other.

There were, however, a few important facts connected with the undertaking, of which she was not so wholly ignorant; and although these were of a general nature, they were not unimportant. In the first place, she knew that she was sufficiently wealthy to prevent her having any anxieties as to the expenses of her travelling scheme; nay, she had the great satisfaction of knowing, that she could afford to be cheated. Of course, she had not lived for two long years in London society, of which a fine drawing-room in Portman Square was the centre, without having heard of that necessary but alarming race of men, called

COURIERS. She had been repeatedly assured, that all that was to be hoped for, from the very best among them, was a familiar knowledge of many languages, and of many roads ; and that if she obtained, in addition, a civil manner, a tolerably good memory as to what hotels were to be resorted to, and what avoided, and the courage necessary to cock a pistol, in case her roving fancy led her to visit Greece or Spain, she might consider herself exceedingly fortunate, let the cheating principle be acted upon to any degree it might, short of positive swindling.

Having very philosophically resigned herself to this obviously inevitable necessity, and thanked her fate for being able to endure it, without being ruined, she, at length, fixed upon Paris as the scene of her first experiment.

There were, assuredly, many good reasons for this selection, and most of these too obvious to require their being rehearsed here. Among the rest, however, there was one which would have sufficed, had it stood alone. Mr. Williamson was very anxious that she should make her first long halt there.

“Your health, both of mind and body, appears to be everything that I could wish, my Clara,” said he, when this choice was under discussion; “but, nevertheless, I shall be comforted, if you pass the coming winter where, if I wished it, I could reach you within a few hours.”

This at once settled the question, and Paris was fixed upon as poor Clara’s *coup d’essai* in the unsettled and desultory mode of life which she proposed to herself.

Although my very isolated heroine had hitherto rather shunned, than sought for friends, or even acquaintance, among the very miscellaneous set which constituted Mrs. Brixbourg’s society, she did not continue to be a member of the family for two years, without becoming in a greater or less degree acquainted with several of them, besides the Honourable Henry Octavius Hamilton.

There was a certain Mrs. Copt, who, from her general style of living, appeared to be a woman of good fortune, who evidently took considerable pains to make herself agreeable to the heiress; and her efforts were not alto-

gether without success, for her saucy but not ill-natured sketches of some of their acquaintance, often beguiled Clara into a hearty laugh.

There were also one or two intelligent middle-aged gentlemen, who occasionally dined at the hospitable doctor's house, and evidently took pleasure in conversing with her, and that, certainly, not because she was either an heiress, or a beauty, but because she talked rationally, and without affectation.

But the only individuals with whom she became on really intimate terms, during her residence in Portman Square (save and except the ungrateful Henry), were a Lady Amelia Wharton and her young daughter; the latter being a pretty, intelligent girl, about three years Clara's junior.

The title of Lady Amelia would decidedly have been an impediment to this intimacy, if the formation of it had depended on Clara; for although it had required the terrible destruction of her dearest hopes to teach her all the awful distance between lords and commons, she saw too much of the adoration offered by the Brix-

bourg trio to title, not to feel that she would rather select her intimate friends from a class less divided from her own.

But Lady Amelia Wharton left her no choice, taking the management of their acquaintance so entirely into her own hands, as to leave Clara no escape from great intimacy, except by her affecting a degree of coldness in her demeanour to Lady Amelia and her pretty daughter, to which she felt by no means inclined; so that by the time her minority was over, such a degree of intimacy was established between them, as to render her informing her by letter that she and her aunt Sarah were about to spend the coming winter in Paris, where her ladyship then was, quite unavoidable.

Nevertheless, poor Clara had not, ~~as~~ yet, sufficiently recovered from her dread of the aristocracy to induce her to ask for any advice from her *noble* friend respecting her plans for the next six months, although it would have been pretty nearly impossible for her to have addressed herself to any one more capable of giving her all the information she wanted.

But, in truth, if the meditative, clear-headed Clara had any mental crotchet which interfered with the practical good sense she displayed on most points, it was to be found in her very unreasonable dislike of a title.

Fortunately, however, for her comfort, during the ensuing winter, this dislike did not extend itself beyond Lady Amelia's appellation, for the very first person who contrived to find her out at the Hotel de Londres was Lady Amelia Wharton.

Clara laughed, and coloured, when she saw her enter. "Has your ladyship had recourse to the mesmeric seer?" said she.

"Ho, my dear, I only sent to the police. I thought it right to rouse their attention, and put them on their guard against any political interference with the government, on your part, and they very properly and attentively gave me to understand, in return for my caution, that their researches had already made them acquainted with your address. . . . But why did you not tell me in your last despatch that you were so immediately coming here? You might have given me credit for both the will, and the power, to be useful to you."

"You have exactly stated the reason, dear lady, why I did not communicate my project to you," replied Clara; "I feel so very incapable of being useful to anybody in return," she continued, "that I have a great averseness to ask for aid."

"Is that said seriously, Miss Holmwood?" returned Lady Amelia, looking at her very earnestly.

"Indeed, it is," replied Clara; "and if you will condescend to contemplate my situation for a single moment, Lady Amelia, I think you will acknowledge that I am right. . . . Here we are, my dear good aunt and myself, two single women, actually without connections, or relations of any kind; which fact, however, may, perhaps, be fairly enough set down as among our blessings and advantages, inasmuch as we escape thereby the being surrounded by persons in as low, or, it might be, a lower situation of life, than ourselves. My father, though he was a very wealthy man when he died, was a corn merchant, and I need scarcely point out to your ladyship the very obvious fact that the accidents of trade which made him rich, have

placed me in a very false position in society. For all that the fortune I inherit can do for me is to supply me with what I want for my material existence; it can do nothing, you know, towards bringing me really nearer in station to the persons with whom I am unavoidably led to affect equality in society."

"You are displeased with your place in society, are you, my dear?" returned Lady Amelia in a grave tone, but with a laughing eye.

"If your wishes had the power to change it, I should strongly recommend you," she added, "to petition the gods for permission to wear wig and gown, and become a pleader; for you have the precious faculty of appearing to speak with sincerity, when it is pretty nearly impossible that you can be in earnest. Do you really expect that I should believe you, my dear Miss Holmwood, when you say that you are conscious of no advantages arising from your wealth, save and except the means it supplies of providing you with the necessaries of life?"

"I meant to include something beyond the

mere necessities of life," replied Clara, with a quiet smile. "What I intended to exclude were all the innumerable advantages arising from station, and which, as far as I have yet been able to judge, seem to constitute all that is most important to social enjoyment, and that highest of all social privileges, the power of selecting the society you prefer."

"I am afraid, my dear," returned Lady Amelia, shaking her head, "that I must not reckon a grateful temper among the good gifts which Nature has bestowed upon you. . . . Is it possible that you can really have been unconscious of, or insensible to, the unremitting attentions of your late guardian? I have, as in duty bound, occasionally presented myself at the court of my sovereign; but I protest to you, that among all the crowds I have seen assembled to do homage there, I have never witnessed anything approaching in quality or degree to the profound reverence which I have invariably witnessed in the demeanour of Dr. Brixbourg towards you."

"A bitter and a biting satire might be extracted from your statement," returned poor

Clara, colouring. "The more bitter and the more biting, because so justly deserved; but as it does not come exactly in the shape of accusation against me," she added, "I will not quarrel about it . . . that is, provided your ladyship will confess that your statement goes very far towards corroborating mine. . . . The bows which we receive from the well-pleased shopkeeper across his counter, when we have been making large purchases, have, I believe, no great mixture in them of the feeling of liking and esteem which we would wish to inspire in our fellow-creatures. I rather think that the demeanour to which your ladyship has alluded, has been one reason, among others, for causing me to feel a strong distaste for the effect produced by the possession of wealth. I doubt if I shall ever be brought to think the demeanour of Dr. Brixbourg flattering."

"And I doubt it also, my dear," returned Lady Amelia. "Moreover I doubt if I have not committed a sin in quoting him. Although you are very rich, and although your father was a corn-merchant, you are an intelligent girl, dear Clara; and it is a sin to assist your

confirming yourself in a false theory, for the sake of a jest. Believe me, there are but few rules that can be precisely laid down, and strictly followed, as practical guides to us in life, without great risk of blundering. You and I are, as I guess, about equally likely to find this true. My father was, I believe, one of the poorest earls in the peerage ; and I have, for so many years of my life, been accustomed to see and to feel that wealth is of more positive value than rank, that I have, I dare say, lost sight of the just value of both. I can very sincerely assure you, that I have more than once in my life shrunk from making very agreeable intimacies with rich people of obscure birth, from the fear of being suspected of an intention to make them useful And, poor as I am, I should not fear risking a bet that if you were to be equally sincere with me, you might have to confess that you had somewhat of a similar feeling towards people of title."

Clara coloured, and did not immediately reply ; but after the silence of a minute or

two she said, with a faint smile, "It is possible that your ladyship might win."

"Then conquer the prejudice, my dear child, before it conquers you," returned her guest. "It is quite as dangerous to be too exclusive as too little so. Let your sagacity enable you to pass judgment on people after you know them, instead of letting your prejudices pass judgment before. This is assuredly a very queer discussion for us to fall into; because it is so very evident that we are each in our way so particularly good an example of the different classes we are discussing. But if you have courage enough to conquer the prejudices to which you seem to plead guilty, and that I too have courage enough to do the same on my side, I see no good reason why we may not be mutually useful to each other. I am quite sure that you do not dislike us. I know, both from your tones and looks to others, and your tones and looks to me and to my little Annie, that you do not dislike either of us; and as it happens, we neither of us dislike you. But I do not feel quite so sure about your quiet aunt. Is she always

as silent as she is to us? Or does she maintain the same reserve to everybody?"

"It is not the result of reserve," replied Clara. "Silence and knitting both seem habitual to her. We often sit *tête-à-tête* for hours without interchanging a word."

"I am glad to hear that," returned Lady Amelia, cordially; but correcting her phrase the moment after, by adding, "because, you know, that is a proof that it is from no dislike either to me or Annie.... But to return to the main thread of our discourse. What say you, Clara Holmwood, to our both having the courage to overcome our respective prejudices?.... So far, at least, as to make an experiment in defiance of them? What say you to our entering into partnership together for a month or two? You shall bring into the concern as much money as you like, and I will bring exactly all I have got; which will amount (one hundred per annum being reserved for dress) to the magnificent sum of four hundred pounds sterling per annum. What say you to our doing this, and keeping house together for the ensuing winter? My

starveling title will really and truly be of use to us in such an arrangement What should you say to such a scheme as this, Clara ?”

“I can see but one objection to it, Lady Amelia,” replied the heiress. “The advantage of it is altogether too evidently on my side. You will at once take your proper place in society, such as it must have ever been ; whereas I shall find myself in a position greatly superior to any I have ever occupied before and *this* makes the bargain too advantageous to me.”

“You are of age, Clara,” replied Lady Amelia “but you talk as if you were very young indeed ! However, you will improve in wisdom, as days, weeks, and months roll over you, and will soon learn to know that the advantages of such an arrangement are *not* all on your side. On this point, however, I will not say another word ; for in truth I could not do so to any intelligible purpose, without descending to details which would be distasteful to both of us. But looking at the scheme *en gros*, how do you like it ?”

“Most assuredly, I like it very much,” re-

plied Clara, in a tone too cordial to leave any doubt of her sincerity.

"So then let it be!" returned Lady Amelia; "and we ought, both of us, to wish ourselves joy at being sufficiently free agents to adopt what promises so well, without saying 'by your leave' to any one!...Now then I go. First, I must return home to tell this very pleasant news to my Annie; and then, without any longer having the fear of ruin before my eyes, I must order a carriage for an hour or two, that I may drive about in all the most elegant directions, to look for an apartment which may suit us. If I drive you up as many stairs as may enable you to take your choice from among the six most desirable, I suppose that will do?"

"Nay," returned Clara, laughing, "I think I may trust you, Lady Amelia. I do not insist upon any reference being made to me. And, in fact, it will be much safer not to do it; for my utter ignorance might lead me to select what was comfortable, instead of what was fashionable, and all your right honourable friends might fancy it was your fault."

"And so it certainly would be, you simple child, were I to be so incautious as to give you the chance of fixing upon what was unfashionable. Do you really think I would run such a risk? The very best, the very prettiest, the very dearest, and, beyond all else in importance, nothing but what is acknowledged to be the most decidedly *fashionable*, would be submitted to your choice."

"Nay, then, I have at least the comfort of knowing that I cannot blunder," returned Clara; "and I can assure you that there is very great consolation in that."

"Where are you going this evening?" said Lady Amelia, suddenly turning as she was approaching the door.

"Nowhere," replied Clara, "beyond this room, and the two sleeping apartments upon which it opens."

"Then let Annie and me take our tea with you, and then I can report progress. I will bring with me a list of all the rooms I have seen, and then you may decide which among them you will look at to-morrow. I must not kill you by stair-climbing. One of the pecu-

liarities of *la belle ville* is, that, comparatively speaking, stairs seem to be considered as no evil. Ladies of the very highest rank and fashion think that the mounting *au seconde* is no evil at all: nay, very splendid apartments may often be found *au troisieme*."

"Do not think me whimsical, dear Lady Amelia!" said Clara colouring, "but I shall very greatly prefer a first floor, if you can find one to suit us."

There was half a smile on the lips of the poor earl's daughter as she listened to this specimen of Clara's practical notions about her Paris residence, concerning the particulars of which she had previously declared herself to be so perfectly indifferent; but she answered gaily, "Very well, my dear! I am glad you have given me this hint, for the chances are that I, in my humility, should scarcely have made the attempt of finding handsome rooms: really handsome rooms, you know, *au premier*. But perhaps, dear Clara, you may have no particular partiality for large rooms?"

Clara laughed, and replied with great *naïveté*, "Oh! yes, Lady Amelia! Indeed I have! I

was thinking about my aunt when I mentioned the stairs: but I care more about the size of the rooms than she does. Do not let us have small rooms!"

Lady Amelia, whose hand was upon the back of the door, stepped back into the middle of the room as she heard these words.

"I am very glad, my dear, that you said so before I set off," said she. "Let me know, and remember exactly, what my instructions are. First, we must be *au premier*. Secondly, we must have large rooms; and firstly, secondly, and thirdly, we must find these large rooms, not only *au premier*, but in a fashionable situation."

"Yes, dear lady," replied Clara, quietly; "that is all, I think, excepting, indeed, which I suppose is a matter of course, they must be well furnished..."

"Large rooms, on the first floor, in a fashionable situation, and well furnished," again repeated Lady Amelia. "I suppose you mean elegantly furnished, Clara?"

"Oh yes," returned Clara, in the same quiet, matter-of-fact tone; "I think they ought to

be elegantly furnished. Don't you think we shall like it better, Lady Amelia?"

"I have not the least doubt of it, my dear," replied her ladyship, drawing a long breath. "But before I go to execute this commission, I should like to remind you, my dear child, how very little I shall be able to pay towards the expense of it. If out of my four hundred a-year, I agree to pay thirty pounds per month for myself and my daughter, it will be as much as I can possibly be able to perform; and thirty pounds a month, my dear girl, will go a very, very little way towards defraying such a great expenditure as you seem to have in contemplation. I daresay you hate to talk of pounds, shillings and pence, and so do I too, Clara; but as we must condescend to endure this *ennui*, first or last, it is surely better to get it over while the discussion may be of some use to us; do you not think so?"

"Yes, certainly I do, dear Lady Amelia. But alas! I can do so little to help you in it," replied Clara, looking and feeling very sincerely vexed at her own deficiencies.

Lady Amelia laughed.

"Nay, do not laugh at me," said Clara. "I do assure you," she added, very seriously, "that I am as conscious of my own deficiencies as you can be. I really believe that many children of ten years old might be more aidful in such a consultation than myself."

"I think it possible that many children of ten years old might be found more familiar with the details of life than you are," replied her friend; "but I was moved to laughter by the sincerity of the tone in which you declared your inability to be aidful in this important business. You seem to forget, my dear, that the only really important aid must be derived not from your head, but from your purse. You will very speedily become aware of this, my dear girl," added her ladyship more seriously; "I have told you very explicitly how very little it is in my power to contribute, and I am now bound to tell you, also, that such an apartment as you speak of, is a very costly affair. The *aid*, therefore, which must come from *you*, could scarcely be alluded to as *little*, without causing a smile."

"I plainly perceive," said Clara, laughing

in her turn, "that you suspect me of being very extravagant, and it is very kind of you to wish to check so dangerous a propensity. But I think I may set your kind heart at rest on that point. My late trustees, perceiving, I suppose, as your ladyship has done, that my notions on the subject of finance were not of the clearest kind, thought it necessary to state to me, in very distinct terms, the amount of my over-grown income. Nothing that I have yet seen of life has led me to think that the happiness of mortals here below, is a commodity to be purchased by money; but nevertheless, their friendly homily sufficed to make me aware that the abundant possession of it enabled me to dismiss at least one source of human anxiety from my mind. We may select the most agreeable apartment in Paris, dear Lady Amelia, without any imprudence. You have been most carefully explicit in stating the necessity of being moderate in your own expenditure, and I am now equally frank in stating the absence of any such necessity on my part. I have the immense advantage of profiting by your *savoir* in all matters of taste

and fashion, and surely the partnership between us would not be a fair one, unless, on your side, you found the convenience of my over-grown wealth."

"The heavy metal must still, in my estimation, outweigh those very slight and light commodities called rank and fashion," replied Lady Amelia. "However, you have stated the case as fairly as could be expected from one of your way of thinking, dear Clara, and I will plague you no more with my scruples. Farewell, then, till this evening, when Annie and I will come to you, in order to take tea, and report progress."

CHAPTER XII.

I MIGHT write many pages without being able to give the reader a more correct idea of the position and character of Lady Amelia Wharton, than she has given of herself in the last chapter. She had stated nothing that was not precisely true; neither had she, in any degree, exaggerated her very earnest wish that the advantages to be derived from the scheme proposed should be mutual, and, as much as possible, equal to both parties.

It would, indeed, have been difficult to persuade her that this possibility could approach very nearly to equality. She had suffered too often, and too severely from the want of "*needful cash*," to be easily persuaded to believe that such facilities as her rank might afford, in the

introduction of the beautiful heiress to society, could be fairly considered as an equivalent for what she and her Annie most unavoidably gain by the partnership.

But as Clara, on her side, was quite as much convinced that the advantages of the arrangements were entirely in her favour, it is evident that both parties entered upon the scheme with very cordial approval of it.

And, in fact, there was no sort of delusion on either side, for the scheme was a good scheme, and promised many important advantages to both parties ; nor were these advantages lessened on either side, by being misunderstood ; and after the conversation thus detailed, no further discussion was entered into upon the subject.

Lady Amelia arrived in the evening, well prepared, in a very business-like style, to communicate all the information she had acquired. She brought with her a written *catalogue raisonné* of all the apartments she had seen ; a description of which had appeared to her worth recording. After a very suitable and discreet degree of consideration had been given to the

particulars connected with each, the vote of Clara prevailed, in deciding that a furnished house, with a very pretty garden, full of flowers, attached to it, would be preferable to any of the other apartments described.

The very earnest and very reasonable remonstrance which Clara had uttered in the morning, upon the obvious absurdity of economising what she called her preposterous income, prevented Lady Amelia from making any difficulties respecting installing herself in one of the most delightful residences of Paris; and as to aunt Sarah and Annie, they were about equally passive, and equally pleased in the business.

This Annie Wharton was a sweet-natured, lovable, and very pretty creature, not quite seventeen years old. Not all the care her lady mother could take to avoid it (and she had taken a great deal), had prevented Annie from discovering that the want of money was the great bane of Lady Amelia's existence. The beauty, the talents, the charming manners, and the ever and always irreproachable conduct of

this truly excellent woman had secured to her a large circle of friends and acquaintance ; and the persuasion that the preserving these must be advantageous to her daughter, had inevitably led her into expenses which her small income rendered inconvenient.

She had never, however, permitted her debts to accumulate beyond her power of paying them ; and when circumstances had caused this pressure to be felt severely, she had found it impossible to keep the fond, thoughtful, and observant little girl, entirely ignorant of the cause of the anxiety and self-denial which she witnessed.

The contrast to all this which she now witnessed was as delightful as it was new, and the light-hearted gaiety of her mother communicated a feeling of happiness to her young heart, which she had never felt before.

Lady Amelia lost not an hour, however, in making her fully comprehend the cause of this pleasant change ; but though Annie looked very grave as she listened to her, and promised to remember all she said about the certainty

that this pleasant state of things could not last, inasmuch as the marriage of Miss Holmwood must, of necessity, put an immediate stop to the present arrangement, it was quite beyond the reach of the young girl's wisdom to check her present enjoyment of it.

It happened unfortunately for Lady Amelia's earnest wish to impress the probability of Clara's early marriage upon her daughter's mind, that in an accidental *tête-à-tête* between the two young ladies, the subject of marriage became the theme of conversation.

"What age do you call early for marrying?" said Annie.

"I should call a man's marriage early if it took place before he was twenty-five; and I should call a woman's early, if it took place before she was twenty-one," replied Clara.

"Then if you married to-morrow, you would not think that you married early?" returned Annie. "Mamma's ideas must be different from yours on the subject, for I have heard her say, more than once, that there could be no doubt you would marry early."

"If that is her opinion, my dear Annie, it is very certain that our notions differ on the subject, at least as far as I am concerned," returned Clara; "for unless I should change my mind in a very remarkable and a very improbable manner, I shall never marry at all."

Annie looked at her for a moment, and began laughing.

"I have been told, very, *very* often," she said, "that when ladies are very particularly certain that they are going to be married almost immediately, they always say exactly what you say now. So I have a great notion, Miss Holmwood, that my dear mamma is right, and that you really are going to be married very soon."

"If you say that as a mere jest, my dear Miss Wharton, I will let you have your way, for a jest should never be gravely dealt with. But if you are in earnest, you must let me be in earnest also, and believe that I am so, my dear young lady, when I assure you that so far from being likely to marry soon, my firmest

intention is never to marry at all, and my dearest hope rests upon the conviction that I have sufficient firmness of character to prevent my changing my purpose."

There was such a degree of solemnity in Clara's manner of saying this, that her young companion looked embarrassed, and almost frightened, from being conscious that she had jested lightly, upon a subject which, for some reason or other, was evidently painful to Miss Holmwood.

"Do not look as if you thought I was angry with you, my dear girl," said Clara, kindly, "only remember that I am more in earnest in what I have said to you, than young ladies generally are, I believe, when talking of marriage, which, though acknowledged by everybody to be a very serious business when talking gives place to acting, yet, in conversation, seems to be the favourite theme of jesting."

"And so it is, Miss Holmwood!" said Annie, colouring, "and it is certainly very silly to make it so. But I do assure you that what I said was quite in earnest; and I am almost sure that mamma was not joking either when

she said what I repeated to you. But I promise you, now, never to repeat it any more."

"Thank you, my dear girl! And I feel sure that you will keep your word. . . . But you may do me another favour still, dear Annie. I shall be really grateful to you if you will repeat to your mamma exactly what has passed between us now. If she really thinks, as you seem to suppose, dear Annie, that I am really likely to marry, she is under a false impression, and I should wish this to be removed, although I have no inclination to enter upon the subject myself."

"I should, probably, have repeated what you said to mamma, even if you had not told me to do so," replied the young girl, with great *naïveté*; but now, of course, I shall make a point of doing it exactly;" whereupon Clara gave her a kiss, and quitted the room.

The precaution, therefore, of Lady Amelia was in vain, for the few words spoken by Clara to the young Annie were in a tone which, in spite of its tranquil composure, was calculated to make an impression, and it certainly left her young auditor with the very

agreeable conviction, that their present delightful mode of life was not likely to be interrupted by the speedy marriage of the heiress.

But Annie would have been an exception to the acknowledged nature of girlhood, had she failed to construct a romance of some kind or other, on the statement to which she had been listening. There was, of course, no great difficulty in doing this; the only difficulty lay, in selecting from two romances which suggested themselves in rapid succession, the one which appeared the most probable.

The first which occurred to her, was that Clara had already been very desperately in love; but not with that sweet love which meets return. It was strange, she thought, that it should be so, for Clara was really very lovely. And then, she bethought her, that Clara might have been on the very eve of marriage when her lover died. So many quite young people *did* die of the cholera! Perhaps she had been in love before her father died, and the rich old man might have objected to the

match? or, the lover might have married somebody else. And Clara, she thought, had quite the look of a girl likely to remain faithful to death.

Of the only important part of the question Annie felt quite sure, namely, that Clara was not likely to be married either soon, or at all ; and, moreover, Lady Amelia herself was, ere long, a good deal persuaded to adopt the same opinion likewise ; for, as to time present, it was very decidedly certain, that no intention or wish to change her condition existed in her mind. Nothing could be more evident than the fact, that Clara was amused, interested, and fully occupied by the scenes that were going on around her ; unless, indeed, it was the concurrent fact, that she did not feel any peculiar interest in any one of the many gentleman-like individuals who were the actors in them.

Lady Amelia, therefore, like a sensible woman as she certainly was, determined upon tormenting herself as little as might be about the future, somewhat abruptly cutting short her daughter's communication, and her infer-

ences therefrom, by saying, "No unmarried woman, my dear Annie, knows more about what is likely to happen to her in this respect, than the most indifferent looker-on. What appears extremely improbable to-day, may become extremely probable to-morrow. Our present mode of life certainly appears likely to be very agreeable, and we should be sadly silly to destroy our enjoyment of it, by perpetually dwelling on its possible termination. It might, however, be more silly still, did we persuade ourselves that because Miss Holmwood has no intention at present to marry, there is no probability that she should ever do so. So let us gossip no more on that subject, my dear child; for the doing so would very decidedly be wasting time which might be much better spent."

This very rational determination was faithfully followed both by mother and daughter; the adherence to it being made extremely easy by the fact, that nothing occurred at all likely to recall their attention to the subject.

There were, moreover, many causes, besides their having determined to avoid the

theme, which effectually prevented their recurring to it.

Considering that Clara had never been accustomed, notwithstanding the wealth which had always surrounded her, to any of the graceful luxuries with which modern refinement has taught us to adorn our homes, she had, as it seemed, a sort of innate taste for everything that contributed to embellish her dwelling; and assuredly, that into which chance had now thrown her, was exceedingly well calculated to call forth, and exercise this taste, in no common degree.

The balcony which ran before the windows of the two drawing-rooms which overlooked the garden, was of sufficient extent to justify the dignified appellation of "Colonnade," and the ingenuity with which the flower-stands were arranged, so as to contract the precious space as little as possible, while displaying their costly beauties to the greatest possible advantage, was in the very best style of Parisian taste and cleverness.

Among many unsuspected qualities in the character of Clara, there was a stedfastness of

purpose on every point whereon she felt there was a RIGHT and a WRONG; which, though acted upon without an atom of ostentatious display, was never lost sight of by her; and though, like the rest of her fellow-creatures, she was more or less fallible, according to her real knowledge of the facts which influenced her opinion, she most conscientiously endeavoured to keep both inclination and prejudice in the back-ground on all points whereon she was called upon to act, as well as to think.

The mode of life upon which she now entered at Paris, was more strictly regulated by this rule than any one who had been a mere spectator of it would have given her credit for.

That the beautiful drawing-rooms above mentioned, with their noble colonnade, should have been decorated with all that luxury of plants and flowers which only Paris can furnish in positive perfection, was perhaps no more than might have been expected from a *locataire* possessed of so very splendid an income; but a little farther explanation is necessary, to account for the fact that these beautiful drawing-rooms, and the splendid dining-

room beneath them, became, during their present occupation, as celebrated for their hospitality as for their elegance.

In all that passed between Lady Amelia Wharton and Clara Holmwood concerning their partnership establishment, it would be difficult for the most captious fault-finder to name any point upon which either of them could have been found wanting, either in genuine liberality of feeling, or in the unobtrusive and graceful expression of it.

This mode of conduct sufficed, of course, to bring the negotiations concerning it to a conclusion in every way agreeable to both parties.

Lady Amelia faithfully kept her word ; and after the conversation already detailed as having taken place at Clara's tea-table, she alluded no more to the disproportion between their respective contribution to the expenses of their large establishment.

This was a very great relief to Clara, who, though she very particularly disliked any allusion to her colossal fortune, and thought of it, poor girl ! as rarely as possible, was not only

perfectly aware of its extent, but as able to judge rationally of what her expenditure ought to be, in order to avoid the burden of most unnecessary accumulation on one side, or of apparently ostentatious expenditure on the other, as if she had lived four-score of years instead of twenty-one.

It was therefore without either the embarrassment or the fatigue of talking about it, that the co-partnership, in the course of about forty-eight hours after the house was taken, found itself in possession of every necessary to a handsome establishment.

Paris and London may perhaps vie with each other in the facility with which such a work may be achieved ; but most assuredly there is no other place under heaven that in such a business could rival either.

All this was quite as it should be, and Lady Amelia was as much aware as Clara could be, that the manner in which the business had been achieved, was the only one in which, with propriety, it could have been attempted.

But although this conviction sufficed to satisfy her ladyship as to the perfect propriety

of all Clara's proceedings, and also of the good sense and good taste which had so quietly, but so steadily performed all that it was her purpose to do, she nevertheless did not lay down her noble head to take her night's rest beneath her splendid sky-blue canopy, without having a few night-thoughts as to the best manner in which she could perform her own part of the compact.

If Clara, in the important conversation which had preceded their arrangement, had felt painfully averse to all discussion of the advantages which her corn-merchant money gave her in the transaction, Lady Amelia had been equally sensitive, and equally averse to dwelling upon the noble birth and aristocratic connexions which certainly constituted her contribution, in a business-like point of view, to the partnership.

But she was not the less conscious that it was only by making some practical use of these advantages, that anything like justice could be done to Clara.

Had either of the two fair negotiators, however, been at all less delicate in their mode of

conducting the affair, the whole project would have inevitably have fallen to the ground ; for poor Clara would, as we may easily imagine, have been quite as restive under any ostensible display of her ladyship's superiority in these respects, as it would have been possible for Lady Amelia to feel, had the case been reversed.

As it was, however, everything went smoothly ; for the parties concerned (little Annie included) had too much that was good and high-minded in common between them, to render any such mistake probable, or even possible.

But Lady Amelia did not trust to her dreams that night, in order to figure to herself in fancy the species of contribution which she felt it would be right to bring forward as her portion of the advantages which they hoped to derive from their union.

It had taken her but a short time after her marriage to make her aware that she must give up the style of society to which her rank entitled her, or hazard the disgracing it if she did not, by exceeding the income she had to live upon.

She very early became a widow ; but as she lost no portion of this income by her husband's death, her pecuniary difficulties were lessened by it ; and as she was an elegant-looking, and very agreeable woman, she, and her pretty little daughter also, were exceedingly well received.

But though fond of society, Lady Amelia was not fond of being patronized ; and though from consideration for the future prospects of her little girl, she carefully and cleverly avoided doing anything which might lead her aristocratic connexions to forget their relationship, and retained her place among them quite as correctly as she retained her place in the peerage ; she took care that her visits to them should be made in a manner which, while it kept in sight her right of familiar intercourse, cost nothing in the way of fine suits or costly carriages.

In all this she did exactly what it was right she should do ; and when this is the case, it rarely happens that this right-doing does not obtain respect, if nothing else is got by it.

And in truth Lady Amelia Wharton was

not only liked, but very highly respected by those who knew anything about her and her concerns. Of this fact she had the comfort of being perfectly aware ; and though she had kept at a distance many gay ladies, and lords too, with whom she had in her younger days been intimate, she “knew when she pleased she could whistle them back.”

“And the time is now come for it,” thought she, exactly at the same moment that Clara was thinking of the best mode of obtaining the sort of handsome equipage they should want, without her being driven to the awkward necessity of consulting Lady Amelia on the subject.

CHAPTER XIII.

IF all people set about carrying out their own arrangements, and their own intentions, in as business-like and rational a manner as did the female co-partnership I am describing, there would be much fewer disappointments in life. They certainly possessed one great advantage, by no means universally accorded to either sex—they both knew exactly what they wished, what they wanted, and what they intended; and the consequence was, that in a marvellously short space of time, they found themselves leading precisely the sort of life they had imagined, intended, and desired.

Clara's education had certainly been a very queer, and in some respects, a very defective one; and she was herself so fully aware of

the fact, that she had often greatly doubted whether she should ever feel sufficiently at her ease in general society, to enable her to enjoy it. There was, however, one feeling within her, which rendered her wish to do so, vastly more earnest than if mere amusement had been her only object. No one, not even her greatly-pained schoolmaster himself, could have been more aware than she was, that she had loved very unwisely, and a great deal too well; and such a conviction is by no means an agreeable bosom friend for a young lady to carry about with her.

Clara felt the pain of this sharply, so sharply that she might have laid down her head and died of it, had she not felt also, *not* in her fancy, but in the very depth of her heart, that there was still an active, and a powerful spring within her, which, if not impeded in its action by some very contemptible weakness, might yet save her from that particular "slough of despond," commonly called disappointed love. She felt this, and she hailed the feeling with equal good sense and sincerity.

The process of establishing a large circle of

acquaintance at Paris, is too easy a business, for persons so situated as Lady Amelia Wharton and Miss Holmwood, to require any detailed description of their proceedings. A first-rate box at the Theatre des Italiens ; another of the same class at the Theatre Fran-
çois ; a well-appointed equipage on the Boulevards, and in the Bois de Boulogne, with Lady Amelia Wharton, Clara, and Annie, as the daily and nightly occupants, had enough, and more than enough to attract, and to fascinate many wandering eyes ; nor were the inevitable questions as to who ? and what ? long left unanswered.

At this important moment of conspicuous display, Lady Amelia at once, and quite in full, paid her share in the partnership contribution.

Had there been no Lady Amelia in the case, it is impossible to say how this buzz of busy queries might have been answered ; but as it was, they were all readily replied to, and in the most satisfactory manner possible.

"That is Lady Amelia Wharton, and her pretty daughter. . . . How Annie has grown

since I saw her last in London ! ” said a lady of high English rank, in reply to one of these important questions.

Had this important piece of information been given in the profound retirement of a fine lady’s boudoir, it might have sufficed, a few additional hours being allowed for the expansion of it; but no such interval was here necessary, for the question was audibly asked, and audibly answered; in a box of first-rate importance at the French Opera ; and ere the curtain dropped, a very sufficient amount of resolute purpose was booked to ensure as many visits to Lady Amelia Wharton, and her party, as was at all necessary to ensure also their *entrée* into as many fine salons as they felt any ambition to visit.

But this satisfactory answer was by no means the end-all of the conversations thus began. The “ tall, elegant-looking girl with them,” was very speedily proclaimed to be “ a great heiress; ” and then followed an interesting annotation from the distinguished individual who pronounced it, declaring that she should decidedly call on Lady Amelia Wharton on

the morrow, not only for the pleasure of seeing her and her pretty daughter, but also to find out who this graceful-looking young person might be ; for she certainly would not be domesticated with Lady Amelia Wharton, if she had not something more than a large fortune to recommend her.

Such, and such-like, were the explanations that flowed in, to satisfy that thirst for information which was sure to be created by so pungent a provocation ; and visits, and invitations, without end, of course, flowed in after them ; and before the season was half over, Clara joyfully welcomed the conviction that she was very much amused.

But had this been all she felt, her long letters to her schoolmaster's rectory would have been much less satisfactory than he felt them to be. There were, however, other matters besides those relating to mere amusement, which she dwelt on with real pleasure, and which were to him a source of real happiness.

If ever there were a pretty young creature that seemed made expressly to be loved, it

certainly was Annie Wharton ; and very providentially arranged it was, that so it should be ; for assuredly she could not have lived long, had it been otherwise, for never did there beat a more loving little heart than her own.

There was something in the gentle, quiet, peaceful aspect and manner of aunt Sarah, which at once created a sort of new-born activity in the feelings and manners of Annie Wharton ; and it really was a truly pretty spectacle to see how the high-born, graceful, little beauty contrived to animate and embellish the existence of the insignificant old maid.

She was as playful as a kitten with her ; and Clara often declared that she had never known how heartily aunt Sarah could laugh, till the tricks of Annie had taught her.

It would have been difficult, perhaps, to find any other group of four females who, while each was so essentially different from the others, could, nevertheless, constitute a society in which each should so delightfully contribute to the enjoyment of the rest.

If aunt Sarah had possessed no other merit in the world, Lady Amelia would have become

strongly attached to her, solely because Annie appeared so very charming, while amusing her with her playful frolics, and petting her with such thoughtful and unceasing kindness.

And to Clara, the gratification derived from this, was probably greater still; for during the first bitter days of her overwhelming disappointment, a dark foreboding hung upon her, concerning the future of this loving and most devoted aunt.

“If I survive it, can I ever forgive myself for the sorrow and disappointment I have brought upon her?” It was thus her soliloquy ran “Shall I ever meet her gentle melancholy glance, without feeling that my vain folly has destroyed all the happiness of her life?”

But how different were her meditations upon this dear aunt Sarah now! How often did it happen to her, when deep in the perusal of some out-of-the-way book that she had got hold of, to have her philosophical train of thought interrupted by aunt Sarah’s merry laugh, while Annie was gamboling round her in some outrageously ridiculous *costume*, or

mimicking some peculiarly comic Parisian peculiarity.

The happiness created by this was almost unconsciously reflected in every letter she wrote to her dear rector ; and though they were both of them much too wise ever to have entered in their correspondence on the painful theme of sorrows past, the improved state of Clara's spirits was as clearly perceived, and as well understood by the sympathising rector, as if she had written him a weekly folio, filled with assurances that these sorrows were conquered, if not forgotten.

Lady Amelia soon perceived that Clara, notwithstanding her marvellously learned education, and all the occupation and enjoyment she derived from it, liked to be sometimes amused in a lighter way ; and having made this discovery, she set about profiting by it with right good will, for few people possessed the power of extracting amusement from the various scenes which passed before them with more skill than her ladyship.

Whatever occult powers might exist in the "*Duc ad me*" for the purpose of collecting

fools within a circle, there can exist no formula so potent for the collecting wits around one as the compact little phrase, "dine with me."

This phrase it was, which, judiciously addressed to a well-chosen set, caused the dining-room of Lady Amelia Wharton to become as much celebrated for its frequent, though very select hospitality, as her drawing-rooms for their splendid elegance.

Amidst the many lucky accidents which seemed especially to favour Clara's praiseworthy efforts to recover from the fearful shock which had so very nearly overpowered her, the circumstance of Lady Amelia Wharton's maternal uncle having taken up his residence in Paris for the winter, may fairly be accounted as one.

This lively, witty, kind-hearted old man had been for many years a childless widower, but being highly and widely connected, he had borne his desolate condition very philosophically, and though considerably past sixty, still continued to be one of the most popular "diners out" that could be named.

He loved, and admired his charming niece Lady Amelia Wharton as she deserved to be

loved and admired, which is quite enough to explain the fact that, forsaking pretty nearly all other dinner-tables, the well-judging, and nicely discriminating Sir William Lawrence dined, on an average, at least four days out of every seven with his niece Lady Amelia Wharton and her friend.

Most assuredly this could not have been the case, if there had been no Lady Amelia to preside; nor could Lady Amelia have presided so frequently, notwithstanding her forty-five years, had not "*her uncle, Sir William Lawrence,*" assisted her.

As it was, however, no difficulties of any kind impeded their inclination, and their intention, to amuse themselves, and they resigned themselves to this very pleasant occupation not only without scruple, but with a very rational conviction that it was (just at that period of their respective existences) the wisest thing they could do.

Had the dull minority of my heroine been less dull, and less distasteful to her feelings than it had really proved, excepting during the perilous hours when she had escaped from

dullness, to plunge into danger, the contrast which her present mode of life offered to it would have been less exciting ; but it would be difficult to imagine anything coming under the general description of "society," less alike than the drawing-rooms to which Clara had been accustomed in London, and those to which she was now introduced in Paris.

Had it not been for her shrewd conviction that she had got into a *better* set at Paris, than circumstances had placed within her reach in London, she would still very decidedly have given preference to the former ; but on this point she held her judgment suspended, till circumstances should have given her a fairer opportunity of judging between them.

There was, however, one feature in Paris society which appeared to her to differ too essentially from anything she had chanced either to see or hear of in London, to leave any doubt on her mind as to the fact that it was at least more continental (if not exclusively Parisian) than English.

The readiest mode of conveying her opinions

on the subject will be by giving a few extracts from her weekly letters to Mr. Williamson ; a correspondence never interrupted or delayed, however numerous or engrossing her other occupations might be.

CHAPTER XIV.

LETTER TO THE REV. J. WILLIAMSON.

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—

“I have more than once been afraid, since I began my series of weekly dispatches to you, that you might find the letter of the present week so very like that of the preceding one, as to make you doubt whether you were not reading the very same identical epistle over again.

“But just at this moment I have no such fear; for the party at which I assisted last night was totally unlike any at which I have either here or elsewhere been present before. But in thus using the word ‘*assisted*,’ I only

mean to say, in Parisian phrase, that I was *present*; for I should very greatly misrepresent facts if I led you to suppose that I *assisted* either the object or the amusement of the meeting, in thought, word, or deed.

“I have repeatedly, since my residence here, heard mention of a distinct class of fashionable fair ones who have either assumed to themselves, or received from the courtesy of others, the somewhat imposing epithet of *LIONNES*.

“Even you and I, dear schoolmaster, notwithstanding our ignorance in such matters, know what the startling epithet of ‘*LION*’ means, when bestowed on any individual in society. But you must not confound *this* with the exclusively feminine use of the phrase which I now quote.

“Neither is it only exclusive in its gender, but equally so in the preciseness of its signification. The flattering term of *lion* is as often, I think, applied to a great actress as to a great actor: to George Sand as to Victor Hugo; but ‘*lionne*’ is not epicene; neither does it denote only the sex of the admired individual to whom it is applied, but it denotes

also the precise nature of the renown acquired by the fair ones so honoured.

“And having reached thus far in my explanation of this phrase, which has become as familiar as a household word to ears polite, I am stopped short from the difficulty of making my description at all intelligible to persons so enveloped in ignorance as you and Mary.

“Perhaps you may expect to hear that the celebrities who are thus classed are persons suddenly raised by some lucky accident of fortune from the lower ranks of society to the higher ; and that they may have acquired the epithet thus bestowed upon them by some awkward manœuvrings, suggestive of the painful consciousness that they are not quite on an equality with those among whom they are placed, and not comfortably at home in their new position.

“But nothing of this kind, or anything like it, is at all the case ; for, on the contrary, it would be impossible to find any specimen, either male or female, among the noble class of animals which seems to have been selected as the type of all distinguished celebrities,

more completely exempt from the social weakness, commonly called shyness, than is exhibited (apparently without any effort) by the ladies who have acquired the cognomen of 'Lioness.'

"But it is easier, I am afraid, to tell you what they are not, than to describe intelligibly what they are; and perhaps my best chance of succeeding in my wish to convey to you some idea of the general aspect and tone of a class, which is evidently beginning to acquire a very distinguished place in society, will be by my faithfully describing my own first introduction to the drawing-room of one of the most celebrated leaders of the clique.

"Although my dearly-beloved aunt Sarah has been so marvellously cured, by her friend Annie, of her immoderate love of silent knitting (which I often grieve to think was the result of my immoderate love of silent reading), she still resists all invitations to evening engagements; and it is an established rule among us, that she is to be permitted, without ceremony or remonstrance, to remain in solitary possession of our morning sitting-room,

when Lady Amelia, Annie, and I set out upon our evening visitings; unless, indeed, which is not unfrequently the case, she has retired to bed before we set off.

“But on the evening fixed for our first *soiree*, at the house of Lady Hilberton, it was settled between Annie and her mamma, that the former should invite herself to pass an hour with aunt Sarah, before they both went soberly to bed.

“When Lady Amelia told me of this unusual arrangement, I began to suspect that the fair *lionne*, an introduction to whom had been volunteered as an especial favour, might, perhaps, be more celebrated than estimable; and although perfectly satisfied with the discreet chaperonship of Lady Amelia, I asked her very frankly if this were the case.

“She laughed as she replied to my cautious question—‘Not in the sense you mean, my dear Clara, I assure you. On the contrary, I really do not remember having ever heard of any scandal, commonly so called, being attached to her name; and this, all things considered, is, I assure you, saying much in her

favour. But my Annie is sometimes an almost involuntary mimic ; and I have a notion that, with a view to aunt Sarah's amusement, she might bring home more of Lady Hilberton's peculiarities than might be safe in her keeping.'

" ' Well, dear friend ! I dare say you are right,' was my reply ; and accordingly we set off for our visit, *tête-à-tête*.

" The room was by no means full, according to the ordinary use of the word, when describing a fashionable drawing-room ; and I believe we were the last ladies who entered it ; but many additional gentlemen came dropping in, as long as we remained there, which was to a rather late, or, to speak correctly, to a rather early hour, as we neither of us wished to give any indication of disliking a party—our admission to which had been obtained as an especial favour. I rather doubt, however, whether either you or Mary know what we fashionable people mean, when we talk of a *full* room. A room is not full, in our improved sense of the phrase, till it contains about three times as many people as can possibly find

means to sit down in it ; and therefore, though there were but few seats unoccupied when we entered it, we were immediately aware that the assurance we had received of not meeting a *large* party, was perfectly correct.

“Lady Amelia had been previously introduced to our hostess, but I had not ; and having advanced a few steps into the room, we paused to look about us, in order to discover where she might be, that this necessary ceremony might be immediately performed. However, as no notice whatever was taken of us, save an occasional ‘How do?’ from one or two acquaintance, as we passed, we stood still by mutual consent, and for our mutual gratification, in order to look about us—the general aspect of the room having decidedly something in it sufficiently out of the common way to make us for a moment forget our hostess.

“The first thing, I believe, which struck us both as extraordinary, was the overpowering smell of tobacco-smoke.

“I well remember the time, in the days of my youth and early innocence, when I should have felt not only rather sick, as I did on the

present occasion, but rather frightened too, had I entered a room so strongly impregnated with this (to me) very oppressive smell; but in these later days, the organs of ladies have become less susceptible, or the deference of gentlemen to their feelings less profound; for during my residence in London, the discoloured teeth, and unpleasant breath of the majority of the gentlemen I encountered, had taught me to understand that the gratification of their own organs was an object of greater importance, than the guarding those of their female friends from annoyance.

“ But, although I had learned, that this cruel indifference was the case at present about nine times out of ten, I was by no means prepared to find Lady Hilberton’s drawing-room so heavily impregnated with the vapour of tobacco, as to make it difficult to see across it.

“ ‘ Mercy on me! where are we got to?’ exclaimed Lady Amelia, fanning herself rather vehemently. ‘ Mercy on me, my dear!’ she reiterated, ‘ more than half the WOMEN are smoking!’

“ Before I could answer her, a gentleman

who appeared to know her, crossed the room to the spot which we had reached, and said, removing his cigar from his lips as he spoke, 'Shall I take you to Lady Hilberton?'

" 'Where is Lady Hilberton?' replied my *chaperone*, in a tone which, notwithstanding the confusion of metaphor, is generally described as '*stiff*.'

" 'THERE,' he replied, with half a smile. 'You are not an *habituée*, Lady Amelia, or you would know where to look for her; she is always precisely in the same place.'

" Our eyes, of course, followed the direction of his, which led us to perceive a lady, whose age might be, perhaps, half way between Lady Amelia's and mine, seated on a *tabouret* not much higher than a footstool, with a lighted cigar in her mouth, and her elbow reposing on an ottoman, which was placed against the wall, and which sustained the lounging length of more than one smoking gentleman.

" Lady Amelia gave my arm rather a nervous sort of twitch, and turning to look at her, I perceived that her colour was considerably

heightened, and that she looked discomposed, and vexed.

“ She did not immediately reply to the civil proposal of the gentleman who had joined us, and confessed to me afterwards, that she was strongly tempted to accept his offered arm, on condition that he would escort us to the ante room, and inquire for our carriage with as little delay as possible.

“ But I am happy to say, that a second thought prevented her from yielding to this very indiscreet suggestion, which, *if* yielded to, would probably have drawn more attention upon us than we should either of us have approved.

“ Instead of this, however, my *chaperone* took the arm of her acquaintance very quietly, and we advanced together to the lowly throne of our smoking hostess.

“ Our escort ‘louted low,’ and again withdrawing the cigar from his mouth, pronounced the words, ‘Lady Amelia Wharton, Lady Hilberton.’

“ Lady Hilberton, without being either very well looking, or very well dressed, has some-

thing in her general aspect, which seems to challenge both notice and admiration, and it is very likely, I think, that she may obtain both. I have already seen enough of crowded assemblies of well-dressed folks, both in London and Paris, to be aware how precious anything out of the common way is to most of them.

“Anything new to talk about—anything to look at—the like of which has not been looked at before—will always ensure attention, and very often applause.

“To individuals so little *blazée* as myself, indeed, the result may probably be different, a sort of stupid wonder taking place of every other feeling; and such most assuredly was the effect which this *tobacco-queen* now produced upon me.

“‘How do, dear lady!’ she exclaimed, looking at us both. ‘Lady Amelia Wharton and Miss Holmwood, I presume. I give you *carte-blanc*he, my fair friends, to amuse yourselves with whatever you can find. There is an *écarte-table* in that corner; and another for whist, I believe, somewhere or other; and for

cigars, I challenge all the divans in the world to compete with me.' And, having said thus much, her own cigar being held the while within half-an-inch of her mouth, she nodded her head with an air of condescending good humour, and re-arranging with her unoccupied hand the cushion against which she was leaning, drew a long breath, gave a strong puff, and resigned herself again to the full enjoyment of the occupation we had disturbed.

"Lady Amelia having withdrawn her arm from that of the gentleman who had conducted us to this place of honour, he retreated to a vacant seat on one of the sofas, and exchanging a nod with a very pretty woman, who was smoking in the other corner of it, drew up his boots, which luckily looked very clean, to within about two inches of her dress, and again resigned himself to the occupation which our desolate condition had caused him, very amiably, to abandon for a moment.

"The strangeness of the whole scene might, I think, rather have frightened, than amused me, had my companion been less

well-known to me; but when Lady Amelia said to me, as she turned away from what was evidently the pet corner of our hostess—‘Do not be in a hurry, Clara Perhaps it might have been wiser not to come at all; but now we are here, I decidedly vote that we should remain long enough to decide rationally, whether you, I, aunt Sarah, and Annie, had better set up a divan for our own gratification or not.’

“Thus encouraged, I yielded without scruple to the inclination which I very decidedly felt to improve my knowledge of natural history, as far as lionesses were concerned, by watching their ways in one of their own dens; and therefore, after giving an approving pressure to her arm, accompanied by the word ‘good,’ in a tone quite loud enough for her to hear, we set off together to walk up the entire length of the two drawing-rooms, with steps as firm as if we had been used to live among lions and their females all our days.

“Having thus deliberately decided upon what we chose to do, in a situation so perfectly new to us, we felt no farther embar-

rassment, but ventured to look about us quite at our ease. We might not, perhaps, have so speedily acquired this comfortable tone of spirits, had we not so very plainly perceived that it was that which (*par excellence*) pervaded the whole party.

“ Our promenade soon brought us to the second drawing-room, where we perceived a couple of pier-tables, covered with glasses and bottles, not forgetting, however, sundry large sugar-basins; for a very cursory observation made it evident, that for the most part, the libations consisted of *eau sucré*.

“ Nevertheless, in order to be exact, as well as true, I must mention that there were *des petites verres* among the larger goblets, and also that among the *flacons d'eau pure* there was more than one *caraffe* containing liquids of more pungent quality but meaning to describe everything *truly*, I must observe that nothing I have ever seen, or heard of in Paris, has led me to suppose that any of the eccentricities which we observed on this occasion, or on any other, could be accounted for by intoxication.

"One little scene, however, in the way of taking refreshments is worth describing, for its singularity, though not for its intemperance.

"I have told you that our hostess had taken up her rest on a low *tabouret adossé* against the ottoman that ran along one side of the room; and not only had she taken up her rest there, but she kept it also, for she never moved from it as long as we remained in the room.

"At about midnight, as nearly as I can guess, or it might be a little after, a servant entered the room, with a tray covered by a table-cloth. The man passed close by the spot, where, after walking through the rooms, we had very demurely seated ourselves, and we thus had an opportunity of perceiving that the said tray contained a silver dish, covered, together with a large bowl which appeared to contain salad, mixed, I believe, with lobsters, and also a plate containing two or three small rolls of bread.

"Another servant followed with a smaller tray, which appeared to contain only a few

plates and forks. Having reached Lady Hilburton's tabouret, the servant placed the two waiters on the ottoman against which she was leaning, and then, evidently 'to the manner used,' they deposited two or three of the plates, each having a fork upon it, on the carpet; after which, without waiting for farther orders, they raised themselves from their awkward attitude, and with a dignified step marched out of the room.

"We had placed ourselves on one of these double arm-chairs, invented for facilitating a *tête-à-tête* in the middle of a crowded room. Lady Hilburton's room, however, was not crowded, nor was the commodious seat we had found too distant from her, for us to hear and see what passed in the singular group around her.

"I have often wished that I could sketch, and I wish it again now, for your sake, for the pencil would be a much more effective instrument than the pen for the purpose of conveying to you an idea of this group.

"She was seated, as I have told you, on something a little higher than an ordinary

footstool. Her left arm and her shoulders had hitherto been supported by the ottoman behind her ; these fair shoulders and her head being flanked on each side, as I have also told you, by the recumbent figure of a smoking gentleman ; but on the arrival of the tray, she raised herself from her recumbent position, and seizing upon the handle of the silver cover with one hand, and the fork beside it with the other, she said, in a voice distinct enough to have been heard at a greater distance than that at which we were placed, 'I beg you to remember, my dear friends, that I have not dined, though you have ; and I beg you to remember, that though I love you all dearly, it would be a sin to hazard my precious life by longer fasting. The more sedulously you smoke around me, the happier, as you all well know, I shall be ; and should any of you like, under the name of supper, to catch the crumbs which fall from the starving woman's table, you are welcome. The lobster salad I leave entirely at your mercy, only spare my cutlet, and in less than ten minutes you shall have me again with my cigar in full action.'



“Two or three of the recumbent smokers who were nearest to her seemed well enough inclined to profit by this permission, and the plates which had been left upon the carpet were speedily appropriated ; probably they were *habitués*, and knowing what was about to ensue, took their places accordingly.

“At any rate, none of the other persons present intermitted either their talking or smoking in consequence of this *entrée* ; and after a minute or two of wondering observation, Lady Amelia said to me, ‘Do you wish to stay any longer, my dear?’

“To which I very meekly replied, ‘I am quite ready to attend you.’

“Upon which we quietly rose from our seats, and walked out of the room, mutually ready, I believe, to declare that we certainly had not entered it in vain, for that we now knew what a *LIONNE* was, very much better than before we had made the experiment.

“And you also, my dear friend, are, I flatter myself, greatly enlightened on the subject likewise. All that remains for me to tell you in addition, is, that the ladies of Lady

Hilberton's class are much more frequently met *driving a pair* of horses on the Bois de Boulogne, than, as in former times, *riding one*. And now, adieu ! Before I write again I shall have been present at a *séance à l'académie Française*, when a new member of considerable celebrity will pronounce his '*discours de reception*,' and I expect to be able to make such a report of it, as may convince you that the '*Lionnes de Paris*' are not the most interesting part of its population.

"Yours ever and always,

"CLARA HOLMWOOD."

CHAPTER XV.

THE effect of the visit thus described, was to make both Lady Amelia and Clara feel rather more inclined to contract their circle of acquaintance, than to increase it. They both of them seemed to feel that the spirit of experimental philosophy, as they had been pleased to call their investigations into the domestic habits of the queen of beasts, might have been directed to subjects more agreeable, as well as more profitable.

"I think I will make it a rule, my dear Clara," said her ladyship, "never to entice you, or to condemn myself, to go where my maternal instinct tells me not to take Annie. It is not that I think we are either of us at all the worse for the detestable absurdities we

witnessed last night, but that I feel we might have employed the time so very much better."

"It is, however, really a great comfort," replied Clara, laughing, "to find that the daughter of an earl and the daughter of a corn-merchant may so cordially be of one mind in a house. Trust me, I would not desire better sympathy. We both felt a certain degree of curiosity about this worse than ridiculous woman; and if I cannot sincerely say that the visit of last night has *gratified* this feeling, it has at least *satisfied* it; so we cannot reproach either ourselves, or each other, for having failed in our object. But I do most perfectly agree with you," continued Clara, "in thinking that, as a general rule, we may very safely spare ourselves the trouble of going to any party where we deem it better that Annie should not be. It will be paying ourselves a very sorry sort of compliment if we do."

And the conversation did not stop there, for the dissertation upon the circles for which it was worth while to exchange their own drawing-room, went on much farther, and a

much greater conformity of opinion was drawn forth by it, than might have been looked for, perhaps, between two persons so widely different in age and position.

There was one point especially, on which they agreed as perfectly as if they had been twin sisters; and that was as to the very comfortable conviction which they felt, that they were both of them less hampered by the necessity of sacrificing their own inclinations in this matter, in order to do what others might deem necessary, than any individual of their acquaintance.

Lady Amelia pointed out this especial blessing to her friend very triumphantly, and Clara replied with a cordial expression of gratitude and approval for the admirable manner in which this freedom from social slavery had been obtained.

“I hear on all sides such frequent repetition of the phrase ‘Oh! we must go!’” said Clara, “that I sometimes feel at a loss how to express my admiration of your skill, and courage, as well as my gratitude for your always judicious use of both in my behalf.”

"You must not give me credit for more than I deserve, Clara," replied her friend, laughing. "I really love you very much, and rather than see you bored, and looking as if you could give a little finger if you would escape thereby from a dull drawing-room, and be transported to your books and your *boudoir*—rather than contemplate this melancholy spectacle, my dear Clara, I would willingly make an early exit from even a pleasant party; but trust me, I have as little enjoyment in making my way into a crowded room with no other object in view than safely to make my way out of it, as you can have; and though you are well-nigh young enough to be my daughter, there could not be better sympathy between us on this point, if you were my twin sister."

"In this, as in all else respecting our union, I am most fortunate!" replied Clara, affectionately; "and I will therefore confess, without scruple, that our own select dinners, and the gay little evening parties which follow them, are in my opinion worth all the rest of our Paris gaieties. Our dear Annie never looks

half as happy at any of the fine crowded balls to which she has been taken, as she does when you sit down and play waltzes for half-a-dozen couple at home."

"I am quite aware of that," replied Lady Amelia; "and though she has certainly grown very pretty within the last few months, I do not feel the least disposed to exhibit her. Marriages, they say, are made in heaven; and though I am not sure that this is part of my faith, I am greatly inclined to think that the less busy we make ourselves about it on earth, the better. It will come when it will come."

Perhaps Clara too was of opinion that interference with destiny on such matters was not the best mode of bringing them to a happy conclusion; at any rate, her reply was such as to make her friend fully aware that she did not think the exhibition of a pretty girl by wax-light, however becoming it might be to her complexion, was the best mode of ensuring her a happy destiny in life.

This conversation between the partners in the firm of Wharton and Holmwood, though carried on in a gay, and almost playful tone,

produced important effects ; the first result of which decidedly was very considerably increased enjoyment to each, and all, of the fair ladies of whom the family was composed ; for not even our quiet aunt Sarah was unconscious of a very pleasant addition to her day's enjoyment from the almost constant recurrences of a small and amusing party in their own drawing-room, from which she had the power of withdrawing herself as soon as she felt disposed to go to bed, but which her increasing courage, and greatly improved spirits, enabled her, very quietly, to enjoy till an almost reluctant look at the dial on the chimney-piece caused her to start away, almost like a guilty thing, at having so greatly infringed upon what she had all her life considered as hours intended by Providence for all sober-minded people to be asleep.

But although it is easy to record the effect of this altered system upon aunt Sarah, it would be less so to explain how this effect was brought about.

The presence of two or three guests at dinner—nay, sometimes of as many as eight

(the wise *partners* never permitted their dinner-table to be surrounded by more than twelve, and very rarely permitted it to exceed eight)—led to much pleasant conversation, for the guests were well chosen ; and although aunt Sarah would as soon have thought of assisting the attendants in changing the plates, or handing round the dishes, as of taking any active part in the conversation, she derived considerably more amusement from listening, than any one present was likely to give her credit for.

The only one of the family who was still aware of this fact was Annie. She knew the old lady a great deal better than her very highly intelligent niece Clara did ; who, notwithstanding the many years during which she had so sedulously administered to her bodily comfort, had never for an instant either found or looked for any trait of intellect, beyond what sufficed to prevent her doing or saying what, to use the phrase in its largest meaning, was “not convenient.” And even now she became aware only by slow degrees of the fact, that while most earnestly wishing

to make her aunt Sarah happy, she had almost systematically excluded her from everything approaching to amusement.

No sooner, however, did this fact suggest itself to her mind, than she became very painfully conscious that she had been much to blame; and then followed a very strict self-examination into the causes which had led, unwittingly, to a line of conduct which she now so greatly condemned.

Nor did it take her long to arrive at the truth.

It would have taken her longer, perhaps, had she sought for it only a few months earlier; for then she was much less acquainted with the varieties of human character than she was now. She had truly believed her own education to have been exactly what education ought to be—namely, a system enabling the scholar to acquire thoroughly the means of becoming as extensively acquainted as possible with the wisdom and the wit of the gifted individuals whose lucubrations have converted book-shelves into mines of wealth, of a value as much superior

to all other treasures which the world contains, as the soul is to the body.

Nor did the judgment she thus passed upon the excellence of her own education indicate any want of common sense. Till the time she was introduced to the reader, her only intimate associates had been her father, her aunt, and her schoolmaster; and as all the happiest hours of her life—in fact, the only hours in which she was conscious of enjoyment—were those she passed either with her books, or with the highly intellectual instructor who had enabled her to enjoy them, it can scarcely appear extraordinary that the only pleasurable portion of her young life was that in which her good, kind aunt could take no share. It requires no very lively imagination to paint the difference of an hour passed *tête-à-tête* with aunt Sarah and her knitting needles, and the same portion of time with her schoolmaster and their books. In the first case, the painful process of thinking of one thing, and endeavouring to speak intelligibly on another, was nearly incessant with poor Clara; while in the other she could not express a thought

that did not meet either sympathy or improvement.

The exercise of her intellectual faculties was to her as delightful, and as salutary too, as the bounding gambols of a young antelope; and if her speaking features only expressed despondency, and not ill-humour, in the weary half-hours that were passed in her walks and drives with her good aunt, she certainly deserved more praise than blame.

Had she been blessed with a young sister, formed after the model of Annie Wharton, this defect in her character would have been completely remedied; a fact of which she now gave the most decided proof; for no sooner did she become aware of the happy influence which Annie's gay spirits produced on the now laughter-loving aunt Sarah, than she took care that none of their easy, though often antithetic little parties should be without some element sufficiently light and brilliant to enliven those whose enjoyment of society consisted more in watching for a jest, than in explaining the intellects and theories of their companions.

And nothing certainly could prosper better

than the partnership drawing-room, under these regulations ; and in justice to human, or rather to Parisian, nature, it is but fair to remark, that dearly as the Parisian *beau monde* evidently love to congregate in large and brilliant assemblies, it is rare to find any one among them insensible to the superior gratification to be derived from being admitted among a small knot of well-chosen individuals, capable of awakening the intellect.

There can indeed be little doubt that the fashion of bringing together a greater number of people than can be comfortably accommodated in the space prepared for their reception, has its origin in economy rather than in ostentation. Were these enormous gatherings the only mode of proving to the world of fashion that the gatherer was belonging to the set which constitute its honoured community, these mob-like meetings might be considered as essential to the reputation of those who bring them together.

But this, in truth, is very far from being the case. People who can afford to receive often, are not driven to the desperate necessity

of depositing a portion of their elegant friends on the staircase, because it is by far the most economical manner of receiving them ; and the speedily notorious fact, that Lady Amelia Wharton and Miss Holmwood never gave large parties, but received almost every evening, and gave very frequent, and very pleasant dinner parties, certainly tended to increase, rather than diminish the high estimation in which they were held. Nevertheless, this system, excellent as it was, had a tendency, perhaps, to engender a greater degree of indulgence in whim, than is altogether safe and judicious, when young ladies are in the case ; for if it should happen that any favourite *habitué* were a marriageable person of the desirable class, it would be rather difficult for them to escape the imputation of intending to captivate him. In the case of Clara, indeed, there was no danger of this ; for though it is more than probable that no one in the wide city of Paris, not even the Lady Amelia Wharton herself, had any very correct idea of the real amount of Miss Holmwood's fortune ; her ladyship had very properly taken care that no one should suppose the

richly endowed heiress was only a guest in the house which her revenues supported so liberally.

No one, therefore, was at all likely to insinuate that the rich and the noble, whose talents and character might render them frequent guests at Lady Amelia's table, were selected for the sake of the wealthy Clara; but the case was very different as respected the slightly-portioned Annie; and her sensitive lady mother was so fully aware of this, that she scrupled not very frankly to express her dread of any such imputation to her friend Clara.

"Nobody that knows you, Lady Amelia, will be at all likely to conceive such an idea," was Clara's reply.

"I hope, and believe so," returned her friend; "but what a vast majority of those with whom we mingle in society *know us not*. There is but one way, I think, of preventing insinuations which would be so odious, and so painful to me; and that is by our indulging ourselves occasionally, when my uncle, Sir William Lawrence, dines here, by inviting some of his clever pets to come with him. He

is famous for picking up '*bright boys*,' as he used to call them ; not any of whom would be at all likely to be suspected of being 'a very good match for Miss Wharton.' I have more than one of the class in my eye, whom he has saucily brought here, once or twice in an evening ; but if he invite them occasionally to dinner, they will serve to neutralize the effect produced by any of the *desirables* to whom we may have extended the same favour very frequently, although assuredly this has been done without calculating their rent rolls, or the possible attraction of Annie's laughing eyes."

Considering the many essential points of difference between these two partner ladies—rank, fortune, education, intellect, and experience, included—the genuine accordance between them on all points, relative to their social proceedings, and manner of life, was quite perfect.

You could not "desire better sympathy." It was not in words only, but most cordially in spirit also, that Clara gave her sanction and approval to this suggestion ; not that her

feelings were precisely similar to those of Lady Amelia on the subject; that, of course, was impossible; for truly as she loved the pretty, playful, sweet-natured Annie, she neither did nor could feel the same sort of sensitive anxiety about her, as that which filled the heart of her mother. But there was no need of this, in order to produce the sympathy above mentioned, though the practical result of it was much the same; for it led her to approve very heartily of the occasional admission of some of Sir William's talented favourites at their dinner parties, having already become somewhat aware of the very important fact, that neither high station, finished education, nor even graceful manner, would suffice to ensure brilliant table-talk; and that it would be as vain to expect fine sherry to produce the effect of sparkling champagne, as to hope that aristocratic polish would supply the want of ready wit.

Considering, however, that at this time Clara herself had but recently completed her twenty-second year, it might seem probable that she should feel it to be within the verge of possibility that she might *herself* be suspected of

looking forward to a brilliant matrimonial establishment ; but it was quite as likely that she should occupy her thoughts upon the chances for, and against, her becoming Queen of England, as upon the possibility of her ever being married at all ; and perhaps nothing can give a more just idea of the clear-sighted view which Lady Amelia Wharton took of her character, than the fact that she was pretty nearly as much aware of this, as Clara herself.

CHAPTER XVI.

PERHAPS of all the goods the gods can give (the vulgar necessities of life being provided for), the most precious is freedom of will and of action. OF COURSE, like every other blessing, it must be enjoyed with judgment and discretion, or the blessing may speedily be converted into the reverse ; but where the intellect and the character are of a tolerably high order, the power of following the dictates of the will must be very delightful.

As, for the most part, we certainly are but frail creatures, there doubtless may be some risk that the indulgence of will may have a tendency to make us *wilful* ; but from this detestable sort of egotism my heroine was

preserved both by her own generous and unselfish temper, and her just appreciation of its dreadful agency, as she had witnessed it in the person of Miss Anastasia Brixbourg.

It was therefore without any danger of becoming overbearing, or tyrannical, that Clara gathered from this conversation with her friend that one result of their having magnanimously determined to decline all invitations to make themselves part and parcel of a fashionable crowd, was to be the chartered license of indulging any tolerably reasonable whim which might lead either of them to enliven their chosen circle, by receiving such individuals as their fancy and their judgment combined, might lead them to consider as deserving the privilege of being admitted to it.

And in truth they both felt that there appeared to be little chance that they should either of them blunder very dangerously in making such selection. Lady Amelia's lifelong habits and feelings would have put a much less clever woman too sufficiently *au fait* of the tone of good society, to make it at all probable that she would be likely



to err, by mistaking a man of low habits and associations for a gentleman ; while the elevated tone of mind generated by the education and pursuits of Clara, would have quite as powerful an influence upon her judgment in forming such an estimate of those presented to her, as to make an equally powerful barrier on her part against any oversight in her choice of associates.

Both the ladies were so fully and so reciprocally conscious of these facts, that they acted upon their convictions, without discussing them ; and the result was, that their drawing-room became decidedly one of the most agreeable in Paris. They always seemed to have enough, and never too many guests ; and by pleading a reluctance to accepting invitations to crowded parties on account of Lady Amelia's delicate chest, (who did not scruple to make the most of a cough for the purpose,) they kept up as much social intercourse among the fine folks of their acquaintance, as was in any way conducive to their enjoyment. The system thus established of consulting their own inclinations more than their visiting list,

was very cordially encouraged by Sir William Lawrence ; and its being adopted was probably the principal cause of his taking a lodging for six months at no great distance from them, instead of remaining at an hotel, while perpetually declaring that he was about to return to London. This change in his plans was in every way extremely agreeable to his niece ; for notwithstanding her cordial approbation of the proposed change in their manner both of visiting and of receiving company, she certainly condescended to feel considerable satisfaction from finding that her uncle approved it also.

Skilfully, however, as this change in their system of visiting was carried into effect, it could not be done without producing a few observations, and a little gossip. "What has become of Lady Amelia Wharton, her pretty daughter, and her stately guest?" said one.

"I believe there is a marriage on the tapis," was the reply.

"Which of the three ladies is to be the bride?" said a third.

"Oh! the heiress, of course!" returned a fourth. "Lady Amelia never talks about her,"

was added ; “ but I am positively assured that her tall, pale, but very elegant-looking guest is a great London heiress.”

But as none of this reached the ears of the parties concerned, and, moreover, would have caused no great emotion of any kind if it had, the utterance of it produced no great effect ; and the wonder expressed at their so seldom being visible, excepting at the theatres, which, to confess the truth, they all (save aunt Sarah) very greatly enjoyed, settled itself at last into their all declaring that Sir William Lawrence had promised to make Miss Wharton his sole heiress ; and that in consequence of this promise, which many hinted was only conditional, and depended upon his being suffered to invite his friends to Lady Amelia’s house, instead of his own, her ladyship had been prevailed upon to give up her own large and brilliant circle of acquaintance, in order to be always at liberty to receive his.

That Miss Holmwood should quietly submit to this, excited no surprise ; for in the first place she took all possible care to appear only as the guest of Lady Amelia ; and, moreover,

her manners in society were so peculiarly quiet, that, notwithstanding the rumours of her heiressship, no single individual of their acquaintance had any very correct idea either of her real character or her real position.

But, notwithstanding the somewhat sudden contraction of the gay circle in which they had been living, my gossiping heroine found no difficulty in filling her weekly despatch to the never-forgotten schoolmaster.

He had told her that the arrival of a letter from her was a signal for them to prepare for quite as great enjoyment at their quiet fire-side, as she could have had in witnessing the scenes she described; and as she perfectly well knew that this statement was true, as otherwise it would never have been made, she very resolutely determined that her pages should be filled, although she could no longer make all the gayest parties in Paris the theme of her narratives.

But no longer having such various and such brilliant scenes to describe, she was led to dwell more at length on individual character; and in this way both Mary and her uncle be-

came, as they declared, very personally intimate with many of those with whom Clara most frequently associated.

Among these was a young Frenchman whom Sir William Lawrence had more than once brought with him to dine with Lady Amelia and her friend, when no very large party was expected.

This young man, by name Victor Dormont, had much, very much, to recommend him to the favour of every tolerably amiable and intelligent human being with whom accident made him acquainted. In the first place, first, as being first discerned, this Victor Dormont was *superbly* handsome ; I know no other epithet which can in any degree convey an idea of his appearance. His noble stature, his powerful, graceful, but as yet almost slender figure—the animated, but often thoughtful expression of his fine dark eye—the indescribable sweetness of his smile, the perfect beauty of his teeth, and the harmonious symmetry of every feature, rendered his appearance altogether so highly attractive, that it would have been difficult to find any one bold

enough to confess that they did not share the fascination which he seemed to carry about with him.

It is probable, however, that this fascination might have been as short-lived as it was sudden and irresistible, had this personal beauty been the only advantage bestowed upon him by nature ; but in truth he was, in many other respects, very highly gifted ; being intelligent, animated, sweet-tempered, and brimful of kind feelings, as well as of animal spirits ; in fact, it seemed almost impossible that any one could be found morose enough to resist his power of pleasing ; nay, of really attaching to him all with whom chance brought him acquainted.

Sir William Lawrence was certainly one of the last men in the world likely to be insensible to all this charm of appearance and manner ; and as the young man had been introduced to him by a French gentleman, for whom Sir William felt very high esteem, he had introduced him to Lady Amelia and her friend, not only without scruple, but with some inclination to boast that he was paying them a compliment by so doing, inasmuch as the young man

was so generally popular, that he constantly received a vast many more invitations than it was possible for him to accept.

Sir William Lawrence was an excellent man in his way ; and his way, moreover, was very far from being a bad one ; he was warm-hearted, generous, and sweet-tempered ; and though he had for the most part divided a bachelor's life of fifty-five years' standing, between the gay capitals of London and Paris, he was as far as possible from being unprincipled or dissolute in any way. His taste was too refined, and his passions too well regulated, to permit him to peril fortune, health, and happiness, by excess of any kind ; and he was accordingly considered, as he well deserved to be, as a most estimable, as well as a most amiable man.

Had he married, instead of leading the easy life of a bachelor, he would probably have been a more admirable person still, for in that case he must inevitably have been led, on some points, to act with more deliberate consideration than he was now in the habit of doing ; and the constant and easy entry which he had

contrived to obtain for his favourite, Victor Dormont, at the house of his niece, her youthful friend, and her very attractive daughter, was one proof, among many, that he was rather apt to do what was agreeable, without setting his judgment very severely to work in order to discover whether or no any good reason existed to check his doing it.

We are so much more accustomed to see people sin by being too much, instead of too little, officious about the affairs of their friends and acquaintance, that it is difficult to class Sir William Lawrence's habit of not doing so, as a fault. Moreover, he had a very high and a very just opinion of the good sense and judgment of his niece, Lady Amelia, and would no more have deemed it his duty to keep watch over her conduct, or dictate to her what she had better do, or not do, than to have attended her to her milliner's, and dictated the form of her bonnet.

There was, perhaps, only one point in which the high opinion he thus formed of her judgment was likely to be erroneous, and that was as to the estimate which she had formed of

himself. In fact, Lady Amelia had a higher idea of the wisdom and experience of her uncle, than either his wisdom or experience deserved. Perhaps a very decidedly bachelor uncle, with a tolerably good income at his disposal, is generally *looked up* to, in every sense of the phrase ; but be this as it may, it certainly was the habit of Lady Amelia Wharton to comply with her uncle Lawrence's whims and wishes, quite as a matter of course ; and she would no more have thought of saying no, when he said, " May I bring Victor to dine here to-morrow ? " than of requesting that he would not come and dine with her himself.

In short, the handsome, animated, fascinating Victor Dormont was much oftener, and with much greater intimacy in the society of her ladyship's pretty, thoughtless, gay-hearted young daughter, than was at all prudent, if she did not wish them to fall in love with each other.

It was quite impossible that Clara, with all her excellent understanding, and highly-cultivated mind, could be of any use to her in this

matter; for the terrible disappointment she had herself met in the only affair of the heart with which she had had anything to do, had given her a sort of instinctive averseness to all speculations on the subject; and even had this been otherwise, her entire confidence in Lady Amelia's discretion and thorough knowledge of the world, to say nothing of her devoted love for her daughter, would have been quite sufficient to prevent her obtruding upon her any observations on the subject.

If any circumstance occasionally suggested to her the idea, that these two gay-hearted young creatures appeared particularly happy when together, it was invariably accompanied by the conviction, that if this were really the case, Lady Amelia must not only be aware of it, but perfectly well aware also that the young man was one whom she would have no objection to receive as a son-in-law; and, moreover, that her highly-esteemed uncle, Sir William Lawrence, also must have himself been perfectly well aware of this fact before he had introduced him to his niece, and her young

daughter, in such a way as to obtain for him the easy and friendly welcome with which he was now received, and which could not fail of producing a great degree of intimacy.

CHAPTER XVII.

MEANWHILE nothing could succeed more perfectly as a scheme of enjoyment for all the parties concerned in it, than did their present plan of restricting the circle of their acquaintance as much as possible to those whose ideas of the pleasures to be derived from society agreed with their own.

No sooner, indeed, had Lady Amelia and Clara confessed to each other, that they considered the ceremony of every night making part of a superbly attired mob, as about the most tiresome duty of life, than they magnanimously took and kept the resolution of giving it up.

But the conversation in which the subject was most fully discussed, and the line of con-

duct finally decided on, by which they proposed to release themselves from the species of slavery of which they complained, is so characteristic of their respective feelings, as well as explanatory of the means by which they proposed to release themselves from the evil, that a part of it, at least, must be given verbatim.

The very particular excess of weariness endured on the preceding night at a very particularly late, and very particularly splendid party, was the theme by which the discussion was opened.

"Then why, dearest Clara, should we endure it?" exclaimed Lady Amelia, earnestly, fixing her eyes, as she spoke, upon those of her companion and partner, as if to read in them the effect of her words.

Clara silently returned her look for a moment; and then, without removing her eyes, repeated, demurely, the "WHY?" in an accent which said quite as much as if she had added, "*Ay! Why, indeed!*"

A very few additional words were required to make each of the ladies perfectly aware of

the important fact that they were both exceedingly well inclined to forswear at once, and for ever, the dull brilliance of crowded drawing-rooms ; and from this time forward little or no discussion of this purposed change took place between them.

The not very profound interest expressed on the subject by their friends and acquaintance, elicited all the information on the subject which was thought necessary for them from Lady Amelia, who very civilly assured those who civilly sought for the cause of their lamented eclipse, that regard for their *health* had occasioned it ; and as this was a point upon which even the most officious could scarcely combat the obvious fact, that "they knew best," they were very speedily left to follow their own devices, which certainly led them to a very particularly agreeable style of existence.

Paris was still so unknown a region to Clara, as well as to the young Annie, that a very pleasant hour or two of every morning found occupation in picture galleries, and so forth ; and it rarely or, indeed, never happened

that their evenings passed away without having afforded them all some hours of very cheerful social enjoyment.

It made no part of their altered plan that they should exclude themselves from any society which promised animation instead of fatigue, or amusement instead of dullness.

They very rarely dined from home, however ; because the doing so would often have excluded Annie, and must almost invariably have excluded aunt Sarah from their companionship ; but it was much more rarely still that the four ladies sat down to dinner alone.

It very soon became a daily habit with Sir William Lawrence, after this new order of things was established, to take his place opposite his niece, at their extremely pleasant dining-table ; and his doing so was in every way agreeable to all the party there—for, in the first place, he was a most good-humoured, cheerful companion, full of the anecdotes of the day ; and, in the second, his presiding at their table enabled the partner hostesses to indulge their conversational propensities, by

inviting more gentlemen to join them there, than they would either of them have thought it discreet to do without him.

And where now was that first deep sorrow of Clara's heart, which had fallen upon her like a blight, from which she had felt she never could recover? Had it really passed away, leaving her the same high-minded, even-spirited woman she had been before? It may be questioned, whether even her old schoolmaster himself could have doubted the fact of her perfect recovery, had he seen her at this time; nay, he might have received it as fact, even if he had been living in the same house with her during this time. Far less, therefore, would it have been possible, that any one else would have guessed the fact, that notwithstanding the apparent, nay, the real interest, which she took in the friends and the scenes which surrounded her, there was still a thorn in her heart, which she felt certain could never be eradicated. But, notwithstanding this deep persuasion in her own heart, that a painful, a deeply painful remembrance both of conscious indiscretion, and of

wounded affection, must abide with her for ever, she was as little likely as the truest friend she had could wish her to be, to suffer this persuasion to neutralize the many blessings she possessed.

On the contrary, she systematically welcomed every opportunity of bringing them into action; and the result was, that though a most deeply-disappointed, she was far from being a melancholy, or an unhappy young woman.

It might have proved a dangerous encouragement to coquetry, however, had the fair creatures who find so large a portion of their happiness in the delightful consciousness of being admired, become aware how very greatly the absence of all wish to inspire admiration neutralized the effect of Clara's beauty in obtaining it.

Everybody who saw her, indeed, freely acknowledged that she was extremely handsome; nay, that she was extremely agreeable also; nevertheless, the gentlemen did not fall in love with her, nor did the ladies in general find out any of those little blemishes and im-

perfections, which is so often the result of female examination, when set to work upon much-vaunted loveliness.

But of all this, Clara was not only unmindful, but totally unconscious; yet, this did not by any means arise from feelings of indifference towards those with whom she associated; on the contrary, a great part of the enjoyment she found in society, arose from her taking considerably more than a common degree of interest in the characters and peculiarities of those with whom she associated.

She had, from a very early period of her life, been so constant and steadfast a reader, that she seemed less in want of the commentaries of books upon men, than of men upon books; and the circle in which she now lived, though greatly contracted since the dear five hundred friends of the ball-room had given them up, was still by no means a very small one, so that this new-born spirit of speculation had ample scope in which to exercise itself; and the consciousness that the weekly records of these speculations, which were regularly transmitted to her schoolmaster, formed

an essential portion of his amusement, would have led her to persevere in the habit, had it been less agreeable to herself than it really was.

END OF VOL. I.

Just published, in 2 vols. 8vo., with Portraits, 30s. bound,

MEMOIRS OF THE COURT OF THE REGENCY.

FROM ORIGINAL FAMILY DOCUMENTS.

By the Duke of BUCKINGHAM and CHANDOS, K.G.

"Here are two more goodly volumes on the English Court; volumes full of new sayings, pictures, anecdotes, and scenes. The Duke of Buckingham travels over nine years of English history. But what years those were, from 1811 to 1820! What events at home and abroad they bore to the great bourne!—from the accession of the Regent to power to the death of George III.—including the fall of Perceval; the invasion of Russia, and the war in Spain; the battles of Salamanca and Borodino; the fire of Moscow; the retreat of Napoleon; the conquest of Spain; the surrender of Napoleon; the return from Elba; the Congress of Vienna; the Hundred Days; the crowning carnage of Waterloo; the exile to St. Helena; the return of the Bourbons; the settlement of Europe; the public scandals at the English Court; the popular discontent, and the massacre of Peterloo! On many parts of this story the documents published by the Duke of Buckingham cast new jets of light, clearing up much secret history. Old stories are confirmed—new traits of character are brought out. In short, many new and pleasant additions are made to our knowledge of those times."—*Athenæum*.

"Invaluable, as showing the true light in which many of the stirring events of the Regency are to be viewed. The lovers of Court gossip will also find not a little for their edification and amusement."—*Literary Gazette*.

"These volumes cover a complete epoch, the period of the Regency—a period of large and stirring English history. To the Duke of Buckingham, who thus, out of his family archives, places within our reach authentic and exceedingly minute pictures of the governors of England in our grandfathers' days, we owe grateful acknowledgments. His papers abound in fresh lights on old topics, and in new illustrations and anecdotes. The intrinsic value of the letters is enhanced by the judicious setting of the explanatory comment that accompanies them, which is put together with much care and honesty."—*Examiner*.

HURST & BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS, SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN, 13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.





